

1358. a. 26
PLAIN SERMONS

FOR

PLAIN PEOPLE.

By HANNAH SOWDEN. K

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, N° 72, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD.

M.DCC.XXII.

46
2 12
138



the
at y
you

TO
HER SERENE HIGHNESS
THE HEREDITARY PRINCESS
OF
BRUNSWICK,

MADAM,

WHEN your Serene Highness graciously condescended to permit the author of these discourses to lay them at your feet, and allowed the lustre of your name to patronize my humble efforts

DEDICATION.

efforts to promote the cause of religion and virtue, you conferred upon me a distinguished honor, which has a claim to my lasting gratitude.

So great is the influence of *example*, that *virtue* herself, with all her intrinsic excellence, receives a very powerful recommendation, when she shines amidst the graces of youth, and decorates exalted stations.

In you, MADAM, the happiest endowments of nature have been developed and improved by the best education that wisdom could devise, or skill and fidelity execute. Thus qualified to appreciate the value of instruction, your Serene

DEDICATION.

rene Highness wishes the benefit universal, and justly considers its extension through the humblest walks of life, as an object worthy the attention of the most elevated rank.

The dignity of that rank, MADAM, is so far from calling forth the language of panegyric, that, on the contrary, it imposes silence on truth, and precludes the effusion of that respectful admiration, which is the just tribute of virtue, and early piety. All I shall venture to express is a devout wish, that your Serene Highness may long continue to exhibit a bright example to the world, and transmit to an illustrious, happy, and remote posterity, your own virtues and

DEDICATION.

those of your heroic and venerable Ancestors, 'till the blessings of *Time* shall give place to the rewards of *Eternity*.

Such, MADAM, is the fervent prayer of,

Your Serene Highness's

Most respectful,

Most humble,

And most devoted servant,

HANNAH SOWDEN.

P R E F A C E.

THE author of the following discourses, in the form of sermons, was induced to offer them to the public from the consideration that they might be conducive to the advancement of religion, among a class of people who greatly need instruction.

Much has been done, no doubt, of late, both by individuals, and by bodies of men in this country, for the information of youth among the lower orders; and it is to be hoped, that the happy consequences will be felt by the rising generation. It is nevertheless certain, that reading the scriptures, and attendance on public worship, though excellent means of instruction, are not sufficient; and too frequently fail of the end proposed. Much pains must be taken to make uncultivated minds understand, even things that to us appear the most evident.

The

P R E F A C E.

The relation in which they stand to God and to society, cannot be made too plain to their conception, nor be too strongly recommended to their practice.

With this view of things the following sheets were composed: The subjects treated are chiefly moral, the language plain, and the discourses short. They are intended to recommend the pure and undefiled religion of the heart; and to influence the reader to discharge the duties of his station.

The greatest part of the many excellent sermons, that have been published in our language, suppose prior information, without which they cannot be fully understood. The philosophical, the metaphysical, or the doctrinal preacher, must not hope to be useful to the vulgar; nor must even the rational moral divine, unless he will take pains to instruct his flock in private; or will condescend to suit his public style to their capacities.

The

P R E F A C E.

The influence of religious opinions, and their importance to the well-being of society, has lately been discussed at large by a man * eminent in public and private virtue ; who cannot but be supposed to understand perfectly the true interests of mankind. He has proved, how much the poor stand in need of religious principles, as their situation exposes them to many temptations.

It is therefore to the poorer and lower ranks of mankind that these sheets are offered : but as many among them possess neither the opportunity nor the means of obtaining them without the assistance of their superiors in understanding and in fortune, it can only be through the channel of the latter that the former can receive the benefit intended them : but what masters would refuse to procure instruction for their domestics ? Had they no superior motive, self-interest would be sufficient to inform them

* Monsieur Necker.

how

P R E F A C E.

how much they must be gainers, by the virtuous principles of their servants. their tradesmen, and their tenants. But the author does not mean to suspect the judgment of the public, or to call their generosity in question. Convinced of their liberality, and trusting to their candor, she is persuaded that they will readily lend their generous assistance to promote the design under consideration; by which, a part at least, of the benefit intended, may accrue to individuals and to society.

C O N-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

On Faith.

ST. JOHN XIV. I.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me.

Page 1

S E R M O N II.

On keeping the Sabbath.

HEBREWS X. and part of 25th ver.

Not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

9

S E R M O N III.

On Profaneness.

EXODUS XX. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

18

S E R M O N IV.

Against Lying.

COL. III. 9.

Lye not one to another.

26

S E R M O N V.

On Envy.

I COR. XIII. 4.

Charity envieth not.

33

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N VI.

On Forgiveness.

MATT. VI. 14.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Page 41

S E R M O N VII.

On the Rule of Christian Equity.

MATT. VII. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law, and the prophets.

50

S E R M O N VIII.

On Indifference in Religion.

LUKE XIV. 16, 17, 18, 19.

Then said he unto him, a certain man made a great supper and bade many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse; the first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

57

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N IX.

On a universally religious Conduct.

I COR. X. 31.

Therefore, whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

Page 67

S E R M O N X.

On the Advantages of a religious Conduct.

I TIM. IV. 8.

Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

74

S E R M O N XI.

Wisdom preferable to Riches.

PROV. XVI. 16.

How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?

84

S E R M O N XII.

On early Piety.

ECCLES. XII. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

94

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N XIII.

Address to young Persons before Confirmation.

GALAT. III. 27.

*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ,
have put on Christ.*

Page 105

S E R M O N XIV.

The Advantages arising from the Knowledge of
God.

JOB XXII. 21.

Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace. 115

S E R M O N XV.

On respect due from Servants to Masters.

I TIM. VI. 1.

*Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their
own masters worthy of honor; that the name of God,
and his doctrine, be not blasphemed.* 124

S E R M O N XVI.

Fidelity and Obedience to Masters the Duty of
Servants.

EPHES. VI. 5, 6, 7, 8.

*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters ac-
cording to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sin-
gleness*

C O N T E N T S.

gleness of heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Page 133

S E R M O N XVII.

The bad Consequences of Extravagance, and the Excellency of Simplicity in Dress and Behaviour.

PROV. XXXI. 30.

Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

140

S E R M O N XVIII.

On Diligence.

PROV. XXXI. 27, 28.

She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

152

S E R M O N XIX.

The Advantages of an humble Station pointed out.

PROV. XXVIII. 6.

Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his way, though he be rich.

163

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N XX.

Happinefs independent on Wealth.

PROV. XV. 17.

*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled
ox, and hatred therewith.*

Page 173

S E R M O N XXI.

Against Cruelty.

PROV. XII. 10.

*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but
the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

183

E R R A T U M.

Page 104, l. 3, for *by*, read *my*.

S E R M O N I.

ON FAITH.

ST. JOHN XIV. 1.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me.

MY purpose in this discourse is to explain the nature of faith, and the reasons why it is so much insisted upon in the New Testament.

Every body knows, that faith in general signifies the assent of the mind to certain things, which from their own probability, or the testimony of others, appear true.

B

But

But so much has been said on the Christian doctrine of belief, that though I would wish to avoid all disputable points, I think it may not be improper to make some plain observations on a subject so often sounded in the ears of the multitude, without giving them any distinct ideas of what is required of them.

He that cometh unto God, must first believe that he is, says the apostle to the Hebrews. This persuasion is the foundation of all religion; for were there no God, no worship, no service, no obedience could be required, and man would resemble the beasts of the field. It is religion which, by placing him under the eye of his Creator, and making him accountable for his thoughts, words, and actions, raises him above the brute, furnishes him with motives to virtue, and gives him a strength of mind capable of supporting him under the afflictions of time, by holding up to him the rewards

rewards of eternity as the object of his pursuit.

But as we are at best, imperfect, even where our intentions are on the whole upright; as we have many sins to lament, and much weakness to deplore; as we do many things which we ought not to do, and leave neglected and undone many duties which we ought to perform; our hope and consolation must be derived, not from a debt owing to our perfect obedience, but from the free grace, or favour of God, who through Jesus Christ, is pleased to accept of our sincere, though imperfect endeavours to obey his laws. But how were we to know that we should obtain this grace or favour, unless he informed us of it? We see, indeed, goodness in all the divine works; but we see unworthiness in ourselves; and might thence infer, *that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* We therefore need *the glad tidings of great joy*, proclaimed by angels to

the shepherds, at the birth of the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the World. Christ came, commissioned by his Father, to assure the penitent sinner of pardon and perfect reconciliation, through the meritorious obedience, sufferings, and death, which he willingly endured for them, and for their salvation. By these he shewed the odious nature of sin, his love of moral order and goodness, and that, *without holiness no man can see the Lord*. He thereby intended to leave the deepest impression on the mind of the sinner, of the purity of God on the one hand, and of his mercy on the other; to convince him that *if he forsook his evil ways and turned unto the Lord, he would have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon: that his sins should be no more mentioned unto him*. But the mercy of God to his creatures goes still farther; they will not only be pardoned, but rewarded with inconceivable, and everlasting happiness.

But

But as nothing short of a divine revelation could give us this assurance, it was necessary, above all, that the messenger should gain credit among those to whom he was sent. Miracles were necessary for this purpose, as proofs of his divine commission. He, therefore, performed them in the face of thousands, that they might *believe* in him, as the Son of God, the promised Saviour. *Faith*, therefore, or *belief*, is the first preparation for acceptance. How does he plead with the obstinate Jews, who expected a temporal prince, instead of the meek and humble Jesus, to believe him for the sake of his works, if they would not credit his words. His life of poverty and distress, his dreadful sufferings and shameful death, whereby his important commission was sealed, and his painful work finished, are, I hope, too well imprinted on the heart of every professing Christian, to need being farther insisted upon here. But when he arose from the dead, according to his own prediction, as well as to that of the prophets

ages before, he gave the last and most convincing proof of his being the Messiah; and one would suppose it impossible to resist such evidence, if it had not appeared that many rejected him.

We have seen, that without this Saviour we had no ground of acceptance and hope; and that with him, we may have every thing we can desire for *time*, or for *eternity*. But if we will not believe him, of what avail is all that he has said, or all that he has done for us! Whereas, if deeply penetrated with a sense of our sin and misery, we receive Christ, not only as the Saviour of the world, but as our Redeemer, and feel our obligations to him, we shall be persuaded that his declarations are truths, sent to us from the God of truth; that his laws must be the rule of our conduct; and that his promises and his threatnings will assuredly take place, and thus shall possess such a faith as will make us fit objects for his pardoning grace. We shall be too much in earnest about our salvation to endanger it by neglect
or

or disobedience; consequently this *faith working by love*, and producing a ready and universal obedience, is very properly called a *saving faith*, because indeed it cannot fail to save us. Let me exhort you, therefore, Christians, often to meditate on these things; to weigh your obligations, to value your privileges, and to pray to your *Father who is in heaven*, that you may obtain that assistance, which he has declared himself ready to give to those who ask it. Rouze your attention to these solemn objects, for if you attend to them, you will see their importance; and if you see their importance, you will not let them go.

Suppose a blind man, wandering on the brink of a dreadful precipice, were offered a skilful guide to conduct him, and refused to accept the kind assistance, or to listen to his danger; what would you think of such a one? would you imagine that he believed it real? If so, you must pronounce him a fool. How much greater then, is the folly

and wickedness of refusing the assistance and pardon offered to us, and of trifling with our everlasting peace. For though our God has declared himself *to be the Lord merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;* yet he will not be mocked, and has prepared *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish for every soul of man* that persists in doing evil, and refuses to listen to the offers of his grace and reconciliation. Let us, therefore, tremble at the idea of neglecting this *great salvation*, and remember that our love to our master must be shewn by keeping his commandments; for *not every one that saith, Lord! Lord! shall enter into his kingdom, but he, and he alone, who has done the will of his Father, who is in heaven.* That we may be of that happy number, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

ON KEEPING THE SABBATH.

 HEBREWS x. and part of ver. 25.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

REMEMBER the sabbath-day to keep it holy, says the law of Moses to the Jewish people. This command required of them the strictest attention, with respect to themselves, to their servants, their cattle, and even to the conduct of such strangers, as lived among them. The strict attention required of them in regard to keeping the seventh day, was like the rest of their law, a burthensome yoke, which neither they, nor

their fathers were able to bear. We, who live under the milder law of Christ, which is intended to oblige us, not so much to the observance of outward ceremonies as to the government of the heart, are not, like them, called either to a painful or expensive service. Nevertheless, if the nature of man, and the good of society require a certain portion of time to be set apart for the worship of God, and the important concerns of a better life; if it were intended to keep alive the sentiments of gratitude for creating goodness; is there not just reason to conclude, that a part of our time ought to be dedicated to the same purposes? Shall we think ourselves acquitted of the obligation, because in effect it has been encreased, since to our thankfulness for the blessing of creation, we are able to add that of redemption by Christ Jesus? We may, it is true, offer up our devotions to God at all times, and in every place. The time is now come which our Saviour foretold to the woman of Samaria, when

neither the mountain of that city, nor even Mount Sion in Jerusalem, are the places appointed for the service of God; but when whosoever worshippeth the Father in spirit and in truth, shall be accepted; because he has fixed his altar in the human heart, and the whole universe is his temple.

We have, in imitation of the first Christians, set apart the first day of the week for the purposes of devotion; because it was that, on which the captain of our salvation burst the bands of death, and rose triumphant from the grave. It is this glorious event which gives creation its value. For small would have been the privilege of existence to sinful man, if the pardon of sin, and a better life, had not been proposed to quiet his anxious fears, and satisfy his longing hopes after immortality. We have, therefore, as I hinted before, greater benefits to acknowledge, and are under additional obligations to remember them: the va-

lue of the prize held up to our view should make us more in earnest to obtain it.

As far as the institution of the sabbath was political, so far it is as much needed now as ever. Bodily rest is now not less necessary to the labouring part of mankind, nor to the poor animals harrassed and worn out in their service, than when the Lord of all his creatures declared, that on *that day they should do no manner of work*. But, as we see that this was carried to an unreasonable extreme among the Jews, our Saviour, who *was Lord even of the sabbath*, rectified their abuses, and declared, that works of necessity, of charity, and of mercy, were not to be omitted; because *the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*.—It was intended to give him leisure for religious improvement: It was intended to remind him of his privileges, and his duties; that he should examine his conduct by the laws of his Maker; that he should repent of whatever had been evil in his ways, and

and that his resolutions of amendment should gather strength, by the worship of his God, and by fixing his attention on an eternity far more important, than any thing in this short life.—It was designed to make him more fit to act his part well in this world, by preparing him for a better.—And surely, my beloved, if the soul be more valuable than the body, eternity than time; the observance of the sabbath is not only a just homage due to the Creator, but very useful to ourselves, and we can neither be innocent, nor benefited, if we profane it.

It is therefore required of us, *not to neglect the assembling ourselves together*, for the purposes of public worship, that we may unite as a people to implore the pardon of our sins, and to seek assistance and protection from the God of nations: it is required by him who sees the inmost thoughts of all his worshippers, that they approach him not *with the service of the lips alone, while their hearts are far from him*; but that they be seriously

seriously engaged in prayer, in praise, and in attending to the instructions of his word. Frequenting divine service in any other manner is levity and hypocrisy, *a contempt of his word and commandments*, and a presumptuous insult on that majesty, *whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and who condescends to dwell in temples made with hands*. How dreadful is it, when by inattention, our very *prayers become sin*; and yet I fear too many lie under this guilt, and are strangers to their condition.—They think that when they have been at church, and repeated a set number of prayers, they have done all that is required towards keeping the sabbath. They seem to think, especially among the lower ranks, that dress is a part of their devotion of much greater importance than attention, or than *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*. You will not wonder at my advancing this, when I inform you, that the want of dress, has frequently been offered to me as an excuse for neglecting divine service, by those whom I have

have reprov'd for not attending it. The universal inattention too frequently observable in churches, the careless manner in which the service is repeated by many, like a set of phrases learnt in childhood, without attending to their meaning, and the trifling deportment observable the moment it is ended, too plainly shew that the heart has had no concern in the whole of the employment; *that we do not know, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, and that the people will not consider.*

Some, who live in large towns, and are engaged in active employments during the week, make of the Lord's Day, a day of recreation and of amusement. But were I to reprove the man of business for thus perverting the little time he has for preparing himself for another world, or the man of pleasure, for *neither entering himself into the kingdom of heaven, nor suffering those that would, to enter in*, I should engage in too large a plan. Much already has been said,
and

and written on that subject. My business is with those who have less opportunity for knowing their duty. They have a right, when a portion of time has been given to private and public devotion, to employ a part of their day of rest in innocent converse with others, and in such harmless recreations as the laws of their country allow. The mind, even of persons accustomed to application, cannot long be kept upon the stretch; it must be unbent, and this may be done both innocently and usefully.

Let me then, in consequence of what has been said, exhort you not to neglect public worship; this neglect has been repeatedly confessed the first step to ruin: whereas if the duties of God's house be properly attended, and rightly improved, they will be the surest guard to virtue, and the best foundation for happiness. Public worship, in the manner I have described it as required of the Christian, is a reasonable service; our privilege, and our advantage; but it is only

only the *means*, and not the *end* ; a method by which we may become virtuous, and fit for heaven ; it is not however a charm, by the outward application of which we shall be holy in the sight of God ; on the contrary, its outward application, if that be all, will only render us odious and more inexcusable. The proper use of the sabbath is above all necessary for those, whose situation in life prevents much consideration and improvement on other days ; and it will, if it be not our own fault, be a means of grace, encreasing our hope of glory ; which may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

ON PROFANENESS.

EXODUS XX. part of ver. 7.

*Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy
God in vain.*

WE have here a positive command from our great Creator, and a declaration that *he will not hold him guiltless*, who from presumption or levity, profanely, that is, carelessly and needlessly, utters his sacred name.—It is my present design to shew from these words, the great folly and guilt of such as have the name of God constantly on their lips, because his fear is not in their hearts.

In

In the first place, it is the most foolish of all vices, because it neither affords present pleasure, nor can it procure any future advantage to him who commits it; who therefore incurs the displeasure of the Majesty of heaven, without the smallest gratification or profit upon earth. I mean not to insist upon the guilt of false oaths, because they belong to the last stage of wickedness, and those who are capable of deliberate perjury, will pay little attention to these exhortations; nor shall I dwell on those shocking imprecations, which are employed to give vent to the furious and unruly passions of the mind.

I address a thoughtless inconsiderate race of men, who are ready on all occasions to utter the name of God, who perhaps indulge in no other habitual vice, and will answer those who reprove them for this, *that they mean no harm*. That they mean nothing is indeed evident; as we often hear cursing and swearing, in the midst of mirth and

and good humour. But does it follow, that such a practice is innocent, because no ill is intended? Few, in a Christian country, are so very ignorant as not to have heard, at least in their childhood, the command of my text. Few, if any, but can repeat the Lord's Prayer, in which, *hallowed be thy name*, means a desire that it should be held in reverence, and sanctified, or set apart, for the sacred and serious use of prayer and religion: and much will those parents have to answer for, who have neglected to imprint on their children an early respect for that infinitely excellent and glorious God, *in whom they live, move, and have their being*, from whom every *good thing proceeds*, and to whom they must account *for every idle word*. Were the minds of youth early taught, that the name of God was never to be used but on serious occasions, and with becoming solemnity, they would be under no temptation to profane it, and would be prevented from contracting so fatal a habit. How must a person of reflection be shocked to

to hear a name which he venerated, introduced upon all occasions; and a Being of infinite majesty and power, insulted by such worms of the dust. Look up! inconsiderate, thoughtless mortal! look up *to the heavens, the work of His Hands; to the moon and stars which he hath created!* Behold them in beauty and order fulfilling the great design of their Creator, proclaiming his wisdom, his power, his majesty and goodness! and then see man, *made but little lower than the angels*, favoured with reason and an immortal soul, capable of contemplating the works of an almighty hand, of loving and adoring his Maker in this world, and of being raised to the state and happiness of angels in the world to come! See this object of the divine patience and forbearance, profaning that glorious name, which he was created to honour; *throwing about firebrands and death*, and saying with the fool, *am I not in sport?* Let me caution you who are ready to make this excuse, that it will stand you

you in no stead, when you shall be called upon to answer an offended God.

I will now suppose you convinced of the impropriety of profane swearing; for a serious consideration, if I have been so happy as to obtain it, will make you sensible of the folly and wickedness of such conduct; and, I hope, dispose you to listen to, and to follow, a few directions which I mean to give you by way of reformation.

You who possess fewer advantages of education, may, perhaps, be tempted to reply, *that you have learnt this vice from your superiors, and that it is more excusable in you than in them.* I am sorry to acknowledge, that too many are addicted to this practice, from whom better things might justly be expected; and who ought to be an example recommending virtue and propriety to their servants and children. I am, above all, ashamed to recollect that I have heard the name of God profaned by some, whose peculiar

culiar office engages them to inspire their fellow creatures with awe and reverence for every thing sacred. But what of all this? their abuses be to themselves; their guilt must fall on their own heads; and their punishment will be aggravated by the sins they have led others to commit. But will the *many stripes with which they are beaten*, shelter us from the just punishment of our offences? Have we not been told, *that we shall not be held guiltless*; and is not this the same as saying, that we shall be found guilty, and dealt with accordingly?

Let us then cultivate awful impressions of the Divine Majesty, and a serious sense of his constant presence. Let us accustom ourselves daily to address him with solemnity and attention; and if we are so unhappy as to have contracted this habit, reflection and resolution will correct it by degrees. Our passions cannot, in this instance, oppose our reason, as is the case in other vices. For who would be so absurd as to plead,

plead, that his constitution inclined him to profane the name of his Maker on every silly occasion; that it procured him too much pleasure, or was too advantageous to his worldly interest to forego? It is habit, and habit alone, which is advanced in its defence. Repeated acts of restraint will therefore, in time, bring over the habit to the side of virtue; and we shall be as little able to bear profaneness in others, as we now are to abstain from it ourselves.

Let parents particularly beware, lest, by example, they encourage, or, by negligence, suffer their children *to take the name of God in vain*: But let them on the contrary, create in their offspring, an early reverence for their Creator. This will be the more easy, as it is a natural sentiment of the mind; a sentiment strongly felt by the native Indian, who would expect instant punishment, were he to throw contempt on his God. Let not pagans then rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; we who are favoured with

so much greater light, and who *have line upon line, and precept upon precept*. Let it not appear that they worship the sun and moon, nay, even stocks and stones, with more sincere veneration, than we pay to the God of our Fathers, who has revealed himself to us in his word, as well as in his works, and who will justly expect more improvement, where so many more advantages have been bestowed.

May these considerations impress and dwell on your minds! and may the Lord give you a good understanding in the things that belong to your everlasting peace! Since vice is folly, *but the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

C. S. E. R.

S E R M O N IV.

AGAINST LYING.

COLOSSIANS III. ver. 9.

Lye not one to another.

THE faculty of speech is the peculiar privilege of human nature. Insects and animals astonish those who observe them, by their ingenuity, and by an appearance of reflection and design. In the larger and domestic animals, the moral virtues of fidelity and gratitude have often appeared in such a manner, as to be a shame and reproach to man, the lord of this lower world: *for the ox knew his owner, and the ass his master's crib, when Israel did not know, that*
is,

is, would not acknowledge, the God who governed and supported them; nor *consider* what duties they owed him. It is man and man alone, who is dignified with the power of imparting his ideas, and communicating his wants to his fellow-creatures by the faculty of speech. How many and great are the advantages which he enjoys in consequence of this blessing! It enables him to receive knowledge and improvement from the reflections of others, and to build, as it were, upon the foundations of the experience and wisdom of those who have gone before him. His wants may be supplied in consequence of the ease with which he can make them known, and his satisfactions and pleasures are increased, by friendly, innocent, and agreeable converse. But if we are not yet convinced of the value of this astonishing gift, let us look on the melancholy spectacle of a man deprived of it, and we shall see reason to be grateful. If gratitude is then our duty, how are we to express it? not surely by misemploying

the faculty of speech to the shameful purposes of lying and falsehood, till no confidence can be placed in our deceitful tongue.

Truth is natural to man, and something must be wrong in him who violates it—Excessive timidity, and a base cowardice of mind, will betray some men into falsehood, who to avoid the censure of a fellow-creature, will brave the anger of an ever-present God; to whom lying lips are an abomination. This vice is commonly practised either as the refuge of such as know they have been guilty of something wrong, or as the means by which wickedness is to be brought about: in which ever of these ways it acts, it is a reproach to our nature, a crime in itself, an injury to society, and an ungrateful abuse of one of the greatest blessings which the wisdom and goodness of God has bestowed upon us.

Let us therefore set a watchful *guard before the door of our lips*, lest at any time we
be

be tempted to say that which we know to be false. This fatal practice, if once engaged in, will lead us farther than we at first intended; because it will probably succeed for a while, if those, with whom we converse, should be men of honest and upright minds. But when once we are detected, our reputation is in danger of being lost for ever. The virtuous will be armed against us, suspicion will attend on all we say, and we shall feel the continual mortification and inconvenience of not being believed. How wide a door is here opened for the entrance of every other crime! self-defence obliges the good man to avoid all intercourse with the liar; he is of course confined to the society of the vicious, among whom he cannot fail of becoming worse, and of sinking lower and lower in wickedness, till his shameful life closes by a yet more shameful death. I may safely affirm, that there never yet was a malefactor brought to punishment, who was not a liar, and

whose course of sin was not began and carried on by falsehood.

Let these reflections fill us with a holy abhorrence of this pernicious habit, which, like every other, grows by degrees. Let the young be early inspired with the love of truth; let them see that it is the road to virtue and happiness, both here and hereafter; let them be taught to consider it as the surest, if not the speediest, means of obtaining worldly success; for who would admit a liar into his family, who would trust such a one with the care of his children, or with the management of his effects? Mutual happiness, among all ranks, must arise from mutual assistance, and this must depend upon mutual confidence.

Has any one then from inadvertency, or from passion, committed a fault, let him not by deceit add another, to encrease the burden of his conscience, and stop the way of his reformation. Let him nobly confess his folly,

folly, or even his wickedness, and he will acquire the esteem of all good men; for the best are the most charitable; they who the least stand in need of indulgence, are the most willing to extend it to others; they know that to err is human, and what all are liable to; but that to forgive is to exercise a divine virtue: they know, that a mind capable of confessing a fault, must have something in it noble and generous, and that it cannot be the settled abode of vice. Indeed it is impossible for a man to make any progress in iniquity, who will not lie.

Scripture is full of exhortations *to truth in the inward part*, that is, integrity of heart; and examples are held up to us, of the miraculous interposition of God, to shew his abhorrence of falsehood. Ananias, and his wife Sapphira, for having been united in a lie, were made instant companions in the grave. Even in this our day and country, instances have not been wanting of persons struck dead with a lie on

their tongue. *But, though judgment against an evil work is not executed speedily,* let not our hearts be confirmed in what is evil. *For he that shall come will come,* to take judgment on those who abuse his mercies, and violate his laws. May we therefore, in every situation, resolve *to walk uprightly,* and we shall not fail to *walk surely;* which may God of his infinite mercy incline our hearts to do, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

S E R M O N V.

A G A I N S T E N V Y.

I COR. XIII. 4.

Charity envieth not.

IT is clear from the whole of this chapter, that St. Paul is describing and recommending a sort of charity which is as much in the power of the poor as of the rich. The picture he draws of Christian benevolence, is so beautiful and engaging, that I would wish it to be read by every one, as it is contained at large in the chapter whence my text is taken.

My present design from these words, is to guard your minds against Envy, which is one of the most unhappy passions that can dwell in the human breast; and, if suffered

to break out into action, one of the most mischievous to society. It is the very reverse of that divine charity *which suffereth long, and is kind; boasteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own; or in other words, is not selfish, nor easily provoked, not disposed to think evil; but which beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* Charity is founded on humility; and Envy is the child of Pride. A vain conceit of our own merit, and importance, naturally leads us to think, that justice is not done us; we compare ourselves with others, and fancy ourselves more deserving of the good things of the world than they. In this act of our mind, we rebel against the Lord our Maker, who has appointed to every one his portion in life; and as this discontented spirit continues to work, it is no wonder that we become restless, uneasy, and unable to enjoy the many blessings of Providence, because some one is withheld, which we imagine necessary to our happiness. But Envy is too
turbu-

turbulent a passion to waste itself in fruitless repinings; it next sets about the means for obtaining the object it desires, and is often not very scrupulous in its choice. Hence proceed a long train of vices which disturb the peace of society, and poison the sources of enjoyment, by destroying mutual confidence. It is Envy, this child of hell, which makes men backbiters, revilers, slanderers, liars, thieves, and murderers of the reputation, and too often of the lives of their fellow-creatures. It is one of the sins of the spirit; a weed, which if once suffered to spring up in the human breast, will choak every natural good disposition, and fill it with *hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness*. For tell me, my brethren, what virtue can dwell in the soul of an envious man; or to what vice is he not exposed? Darkness is not more opposed to light, than Envy to Charity. But as, between sun-shine and night, there is a twilight, so between Charity and Envy, there is a virtue highly commendable, when properly understood

and rightly directed. You will perceive that I am going to speak of Emulation, which from your childhood you have been taught to consider as a motive for action; and no doubt but this principle was implanted in our nature by the Great Creator, to answer wise purposes. But as it is dangerous to confound it with the odious passion of Envy, I shall endeavour to shew you in what the difference consists.

EMULATION wishes, perhaps, to obtain riches, or honours, or reputation, but by just and laudable means alone; ENVY is miserable unless it does obtain them, and will make use of any means it dares employ, to gain them. EMULATION will desire a state or condition like that of a person whom it supposes happier than itself; but ENVY will sacrifice the happiness of another to its own, and frequently is gratified only in proportion as another is mortified and troubled. EMULATION aims, as the principal object of its ambition, at good qualities

lities and virtuous actions; and desires wealth or power, in order to be more useful, and to encrease the happiness of others; but ENVY does not even wish for the *virtues* of a superior; provided it can obtain his *advantages*, it is enough; and this, not with a design of doing more good, (though it may sometimes impose upon others, and even upon those whom it actuates, with the pretext) but in reality, to procure more ease, more sensual enjoyment, or more splendour than it possesses. EMULATION is contented and happy, whether its object be obtained or denied; because it knows *that the lot is cast into the lap, and that the disposal thereof is from the Lord*; but ENVY is miserable if it fail of success, and unhappy, could it even attain the height of its desires.

It is not in the nature of an envious man to be contented; his mind is ruffled with past guilt, and also disturbed and restless with future projects. For could he climb ever so high, some one would still be found
above

above him; some object to excite his envy, and to prevent that calm serenity of mind, without which no happiness is to be looked for. Let us not fancy ourselves free from this vice, because we do not aim at great things; for if one of this detestable character were to raise himself from a cottage to a throne, his ambition would grow upon him by degrees, and he would tell you, if he were sincere, that he began by envying the man next in rank above himself; and so advanced from one regular step to another.

Let me then persuade you, fellow-christians, that it is as much your interest as it is your duty, to watch against the first entrance of this disposition into your minds. Happiness is more equally divided among the sons of men, than they are apt to imagine. The gratifications or pleasures of sense, as they depend on health and a sound mind, are more likely to attend upon the temperance of an humble roof, than on the luxurious habitations of the great. The
fatis-

satisfactions arising from a benevolent heart, may be enjoyed by him who has little to give, for he may be helpful to his neighbour, even beyond him whose assistance comes only from his purse. The beauteous objects of nature, so well calculated to delight a well-informed mind, are as open to him who has not a foot of land that he can call his own, as to the wealthy lord of many acres.

Lastly, my brethren, but nevertheless, chiefly, on this list of general blessings, stands religion, which, with its privileges, comforts, and promises, belongs to all ranks. She will tell us, if we will attend to her instructions, *that a man's life, or the happiness of his life, does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses, but in righteousness of life, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, that is, in the duties and comforts of religion; that a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the treasures of many wicked; and that godliness with contentment is great gain, the greatest and most important advantage we*

8 can

can ever possess in this world. Many more passages might be produced to prove this truth ; but as, from what has been already said, I flatter myself you have seen the necessity of banishing Envy from the mind, I shall not insist upon it further at present. The soul, that is free from this unhappy passion, will be fit to receive and cherish the virtues and graces which properly belong to the Christian character ; for in effect, to talk of an envious Christian, is an absurd contradiction. Christianity is a religion of love ; it is the mark by which its disciples are to be distinguished from others ; and we may safely pronounce those to be no Christians, whose minds are strangers to this divine virtue ; since, whatever other gifts and graces they may boast, whatever qualities they may possess, St. Paul assures us that, if they have not charity, it shall profit them nothing at that day when it shall appear, *that the greatest of all is charity.*

S E R M O N VI.

ON FORGIVENESS.

MAT. vi. 14.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

WELL may a religion which instructs mankind *to forgive and love their enemies, to bless them that curse, and to do good to those who despitefully use and persecute them,* be called a religion of peace. Can there be any thing more generous, more noble, or more godlike, than thus to sacrifice to duty, every revengeful passion; freely to forgive the injuries that are done to us, and even return them with good offices if it lays in our power?

power? The pitch of excellence to which such a charitable disposition and virtuous conduct will raise the soul that constantly acts under its influence, shall be first considered. My business shall be, secondly, to enforce the cultivation of this principle of love, and the practice to which it leads, by the strongest of motives, *the promise of receiving forgiveness.*

Solomon observes, that *a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up strife*; and nothing is more true. We may see, if we reflect at all upon what passes around us, that angry words produce strife; that one passionate and unguarded expression produces another more bitter, this a third, and so on, till, from the smallest beginnings, the most serious quarrels often arise. Ill-will, thus excited, will, in some minds, become a settled principle of hatred, which seeks every means of gratifying itself by spiteful and ill-natured acts of resentment. These, like fresh fuel added to
fire,

fire, which if not fed, would languish and go out, will keep alive the flame of discord, and are known too often to terminate in the worst consequences. How many families have been ruined, how many reputations have been injured, and how many lives have fallen a sacrifice to the diabolical spirit of revenge ! But let us turn from contemplating the odious character of *the wrathful man stirring up strife, to him who is slow to anger and appeaseth it.* How amiable a contrast ! The Christian, who is of a mild and peaceable disposition, or of a forgiving character, for these are not quite the same thing, though they produce some of the same effects ; will, *by a soft answer, turn away the storm* that was gathering. He will not be easily provoked, he will not therefore designedly provoke another by a reply which, though perhaps just, may be ill-timed, and which would aggravate a mind already irritated and off its guard. He loves man, as his fellow-creature at least, perhaps as connected more nearly ; he is therefore afflicted to see him
unable

unable to govern his passions, and saying or doing what he knows that, in his cooler moments, he will repent with bitterness and humiliation of spirit. It will therefore be far from him to encrease his guilt, I might say to share it, by inflaming his anger; and thus, by persevering meekness, *will wrath be turned away*. But, as we do not all possess such a command over our passions, and perhaps, in some measure, from constitutional reasons, cannot acquire it in an equal degree, though all may do much towards it; I would lead such as are of a more quick and hasty disposition to follow the advice of the apostle, *to be angry and sin not*. In the first place, those who know themselves liable to this weakness of mind, would do well to avoid such situations, persons and things, as have, on former occasions, led them into this error. They ought also to curb and restrain the first risings of passion, or, if this fail, should they not afterwards reflect, whether by giving way to anger, they are not committing a greater

greater fault than that which raises their indignation, and which they mean to reprove? Pride, which constantly attends on Anger, will endeavour to make us blind to our own deformity, and to open our eyes only on that of our enemy. But, as violent anger is not of a nature to last long, let us not keep up the spirit of ill-will, by reflections on what is past. It is a truth, founded on frequent experience, that in disputes there are faults on both sides: we have something to be forgiven, as well as something to forgive. If however we feel ourselves greatly injured, let us rejoice in the opportunity it affords us to forgive, and thus do our part towards reconciliation. The sincerity of this forgiveness must be shewn, by avoiding in future every thing that might offend or injure the person thus pardoned. This does not, however, require of us, if we have discovered any thing bad in his disposition, that we again lay ourselves open to be hurt by it: *The prudence of the serpent* implies caution, while *the innocence of the dove*

dove will prevent groundless suspicions, and lead us to do good against evil. *If our enemy hunger, we shall feed him : if he thirst we shall give him drink.*

Our abhorrence of vice cannot be too great, but, while we hate the sin, we ought to feel compassion, not hatred, for the sinner; for indeed none are greater objects of pity. To reclaim the backslider ^{or} from the error of his ways, is surely the greatest extent of charity, and to save a soul from death, has the promise of a distinguished reward. But it is only the benevolent mind, who can *forgive men their trespasses*, that will ever go about, or effect this. Let us now see the importance of obeying this command, by the value of the reward proposed, *Your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

And here, let me entreat you to enter into your own hearts, and to consider what answer you will make when I ask you, have you not much to be forgiven? The best of
men

men feel their great need of mercy from that God, whose laws they have broken, and who encourages them to pray for daily forgiveness. We have not, some of us at least, enormous crimes to repent of, *but in many things we all offend*; besides that, we have secret sins to account for. By secret sins, I mean not such as are hidden from the world, but such as we do not ourselves attend to. Omissions of good actions, which we ought to have performed, but which are often neglected from carelessness and inattention, render us guilty before God. Our Saviour, when describing the last judgment, condemns the wicked not only for positive crimes, for they carry their condemnation with them, but for neglect of duties. *I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.* We are all more or less guilty of these neglects. Perhaps you may be startled at the accusation of neglect-
ing

ing your Lord and Master in such circumstances; but attend to what follows; *inasmuch as ye did not these offices of humanity to the least of these, ye did them not unto me.* If then the punishment denounced against *not doing*, be thus severe, what will become of those who are continually engaged in the commission of actual crimes? If the righteous are saved with difficulty, who need so much watchfulness over themselves, and so much mercy from their judge, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* How comfortable then is it, amidst the conviction of our own unworthiness, to reflect, that if we forgive, we shall be forgiven. Let us rejoice in every opportunity of exercising this divine virtue, that, when we look back upon our lives, our hearts may not accuse us of malignity. Then shall we have confidence towards God, that he will fulfil his promise of pardon through Jesus Christ, who pronounced a blessing *on the peacemakers*, in that *they should be called the children of God.* Consider, that to be a child
of

of God, is to enjoy his protection here, and to obtain an inheritance of happiness and glory hereafter ; which may he, in infinite mercy, grant to each of us, through the merits and intercession of our Redeemer.

S E R M O N VII.

ON THE RULE OF CHRISTIAN EQUITY.

MATTHEW VII. ver. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.

IT is the end and design of all religion, by amending the hearts, to regulate the lives of its professors. In the present case, our own happiness, and that of our fellow-creatures, depend on our observance of this plain and valuable precept, delivered by the Saviour of mankind to all, even the meanest of his followers. It is suited to every capacity, to every age, to every rank of life,

to every situation in which it is possible to be placed ; and is, in itself, a compleat system of morality. It is the sum of all that Moses and the Prophets ever taught the Jews. It has, from its superior excellence, been called the *Golden rule* ; and were it as universally followed, as it is generally known and understood, it would make a great change in human affairs, and be the beginning of heaven here below.—Who among us has not heard ; or are there any who cannot comprehend this precept ? If it is then generally known and understood, it must follow that all Christians, high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, will be judged by it. But though the law is thus binding upon all, it is to the poor and unlearned that I address myself ; because I am conscious that, by giving them instruction, and calling their attention to the important concerns of eternity, I may promote their happiness, the comfort of all with whom they are connected, and even national prosperity, which must depend upon

the conduct of individuals. The poor, and what are called the middling ranks, are by far the most numerous in every society: if therefore they be gained over to the side of religion and virtue, what a happy and prosperous people shall we be! Let us examine the conduct of such as obey this command of their Lord. Suppose them in a state of servitude, will they not be honest and faithful in every thing committed to their charge? Many, no doubt there are, who, though they do not profess strictly to follow the precept in my text, would scruple to defraud their master of money, or of such things as they expect to be called to an account for, but who, nevertheless, for want of this principle, will neglect his interest, and waste his time and substance, by inattention, laziness and extravagance. But the upright domestic, instead of thus contributing to the ruin of the family in which he serves, will say to himself, how should I like to be thus imposed upon by those in whom I am obliged to confide? Should I
not

not wish for honest, diligent servants? Let me therefore be that virtuous character; let me serve my master, *not with eye service*, making a deceitful parade of my attention to his interest, that he may be less upon his guard and more easily imposed upon, but let me serve him with fidelity and singleness, i. e. honesty of heart.

What art, what cunning is necessary to carry on schemes of wickedness! what constant anxiety and fear of detection must the guilty undergo! besides the reproaches of conscience, which, though hidden from the world, are too well known to themselves to leave them any comfort. *There is no peace to the wicked saith my God*; their minds are represented as like to the ocean, after a storm, tossed and troubled. But how peaceful and happy is the man, in whatever condition of life, whether a domestic, a mechanic, or a tradesman, who, when tempted to injure another, asks himself this short and plain question; “How should I like, in

his place, to be thus treated?" Such a question would be followed by an answer, which would prevent any act that a man would wish to conceal from the world of men or of angels.—It is impossible, and it is even needless, to particularise the several cases in which the rule above-mentioned ought to be applied; because as the year is made up of moments, so is our conduct in life composed of small, and of what are called trifling actions, more than of great things. But learn, my brethren, that there is nothing inconsiderable, because one thing imperceptibly leads to another; and he who once wanders from the right road, is liable to stray he knows not whither. His only safety lies in his return; for every step he proceeds will increase his difficulties. This figure is truly applicable to our conduct in life. Few dare to be openly vicious; those among the lower ranks, who will not keep up the appearance of virtue, defeat their own purposes, and run on hastily to destruction, because their character and reputation

is

is all their dependence. If therefore you are not good, your interest requires, at least, that you endeavour to appear so. But remember that, to impose yourself upon the world for what you are not, is to be guilty of hypocrisy, and that such *shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*; they shall not dwell in the presence of the God of truth.—Deceit and guile are the constant attendants on guilt, and it is probably on this account, that our Divine Master expressed unusual severity against hypocrisy. When therefore you are tempted to hide any action, suspect its nature, try it by the sacred rule of my text, and you will probably find there is something in it wrong. Let not the discovery, if once you have made it, pass unimproved: recover yourself before it is too late, and do not seek, by new sins, to cover the old. It is too often observed, that vice is accompanied with vice, and that crimes linked to crimes, form a fatal chain to bind the unhappy creature who submits to be its slave; whereas virtue is liberty,

and infinitely less pains are required to be virtuous, than to be wicked. Who would not then sow the good seed of righteousness, that they might reap its peaceable and happy fruits? Who would not prefer honor, credit, and support, to shame, reproach, and distrust? Who would not seek a quiet and easy conscience, rather than be exposed to the torments of self-condemnation? And who, when they come to their last hour, would not wish so to have passed through this state of education, as to feel themselves qualified for the reward that is to follow? If this be our case, we shall assuredly receive a crown of glory, for the sake and through the mediation of our blessed Redeemer.

S E R M O N VIII.

ON INDIFFERENCE IN RELIGION.

 LUKE XIV. 16—24.

Then said he unto them, a certain man made a great supper and bade many. And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse: the first said unto him I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come, &c.

D 5

THIS

THIS parable, though particularly intended to reprove the Jews for their rejection of the Messiah, is nevertheless designed as a warning to the negligent and worldly-minded Christian: and in this view I mean to consider it, because it affords a striking instance, that a too great attachment to this world, even in its lawful callings and innocent occupations, will unfit us for a better. The persons here represented as shut out from the kingdom of heaven, are not profligate abandoned sinners; they are not murderers, blasphemers, liars or hypocrites, but simply such as have no taste or inclination for a nobler and better life. Were it put to their choice, whether they would be happy or miserable hereafter, they would certainly prefer the former; but it is not such a decided preference as will lead them to give up the smallest worldly gratification; or to sacrifice any inclination that stands between them and the prize. What then can we say of creatures so inattentive to their interest, so careless and indifferent about

about futurity? Charity will weep over their stupidity, and endeavour, before it is too late, to awaken them to a sense of their danger; but it must depend upon themselves to value and to seek after a felicity which will never be bestowed, where it is not desired with sincerity and eagerness.

This life is but the infancy of our existence, in which we are to be trained for heaven. Nothing can be more uncertain than our stay here; to some it is but a momentary period; to others it consists of a few years; to all life is short; and yet we act as if we were born for ages. What care, what toil, what anxiety to secure possessions which we may be required to leave to-morrow! What labour to obtain the shadow; what neglect of the substance! Every thought, word or action of the worldly-minded man, relates solely to the present state; whereas the same things, innocent within proper limits, might be rendered excellent, if done with a view to the appro-

D 6
bation

bation of God and of our own conscience. We may, and ought to be, industrious in our callings, whether we labour for ourselves or others; we may, in an honest manner, provide for our children, and give to the affairs of life the concern they deserve; but to think of nothing else, to desire nothing beyond it, is to affront him who has provided us better enjoyments, and has commanded us *to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*. How think ye, shall that man excuse himself to his maker, whose whole life has been employed in the low concerns of *what he should eat or drink, or where-withal he should be clothed*, and neglected every provision for his soul, nor even thought of what would become of it? He will find the sad mistake he has committed, in placing that *last*, which should have been *first*. Can we wonder that he, who has never asked, should not receive; or that the door should not be opened to him, who has not knocked? *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*

The

The meat that perisheth, and the body that decayeth, are not worth the pains and labour we too frequently bestow upon them ; but the soul, which endureth to everlasting ages, truly merits our solicitude, and will repay our utmost concern by an eternity of bliss. Let us not then resemble those negligent guests who cast contempt upon the entertainment provided for them, by laying hold of every occupation as an excuse for not attending upon it.

God, in his word, and in the dealings of his Providence, warns us against, and every where discourages too great an attachment to the concerns of this life. *Love not the world, nor the things of the world*, is the language of the former. The rich are certainly in great danger of transgressing this precept ; but it is not they alone who neglect religion ; the middling ranks and the poor are alike chargeable with this extreme folly ; and all from the same reason, *because*
the

6. 2 ON INDIFFERENCE IN RELIGION.

the love of the Father is not in them. Nor is the voice of God less distinct in the disposals of his providence. How often do we see the careful and the cunning miss of their ends, and disappointment coming upon them in the midst of their pursuits; or death cutting them off, when they have compassed the height of their wishes. Shall we never learn wisdom from instances like these, which are daily presenting themselves before us, like friendly messengers sent with gracious warnings from heaven? Cultivate then, my brethren, the love of God, and his approbation and favour will be the first things sought after. Cast all your care upon him, who is the master of all events, and of all worlds, and he will suit your condition to your greatest advantage, and make all things work together for good; for *who hath ever seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread?* Should they even appear to be so for a time, their afflictions are the corrections of a kind parent, designed for
their

their benefit, and are more truly blessings than that ease and prosperity we are all so apt to desire. Let us pray with Agar *for the food* (i. e.) the state *convenient for us*, lest being full of prosperity *we deny the Lord our God*, or lest pinched with bitter poverty, *we steal*, and, with a murmuring and discontented voice, *take the name of our God in vain*.

If, then, we know these things, happy are we if we do them. If upon a cool examination they appear to us just and reasonable, let us act at all times steadily and consistently, not as if they were at one time true, and at another false. The object is too serious, and the consequences too important, to be treated with such levity; for could we even receive in exchange for our future happiness, *all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them*, during a life much longer than the fourscore years allotted to mortal man, we should be fools to
make

64 ON INDIFFERENCE IN RELIGION.

make so unprofitable a bargain. Shall then those to whom I am speaking, who can expect nothing beyond a bare subsistence, or at most a decent maintenance, as the reward of their labour here, trifle with the happiness which they may be sure of obtaining hereafter, if it be not their own fault? I cannot support the idea, that those who have comparatively but little in this world, should by their own folly have nothing in that which is to come. Nothing did I say? Alas! my friends, you know that as you cannot act thus without a crime here, so you cannot escape a dreadful punishment hereafter.

Let me then exhort you, who are not rich in this world, to attend to the whole of your duty. Be of a meek and humble mind, and ye shall be blessed; *be merciful, and ye shall obtain mercy: be pure in heart, and ye shall see God*; see him in his works, and in his providence here, and be admitted

ted near his presence hereafter. Be lovers and promoters of peace, *and ye shall be called the children of God.* Be honest and contented; be industrious while you can; and, if sickness or distress come upon you, be patient and submissive under it. The Pious and the Good will take pleasure in assisting you; but above all, the comforts of religion will be yours. Is not your condition in life honored, by having been the choice of the Saviour of the world, who could as easily have been born in a palace, as in a stable? Few of you are so poor, and none so distressed as he, who *was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* His ear will never be deaf to the cries of the heavy-laden, who are directed to come to him for rest. This kind and compassionate Saviour has also recommended your case to the charitable dispositions of the rich in the strongest terms, by declaring that whatever they did towards the relief of his poor brethren, he

confi-

considered as done to himself. Let not therefore your minds be debased by a corrupt and criminal indolence, but ever bear in mind that you are the children of a glorious and happy kingdom, and *beirs of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which shall never fade away.* There may we meet and dwell together in the presence of God and of his Christ. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

ON A UNIVERSALLY RELIGIOUS CONDUCT.

I COR. X. 31.

Therefore whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

THE Christian religion has been very ill understood, and very improperly represented by those, who make a retirement from the world, from its occupations, its enjoyments, and its duties, a necessary preparation for heaven. Mankind have ever shewn a propensity to run into extremes, whereas wisdom and safety lie in the middle course. It is not, indeed, the error of this country

country in the present day, to retire into the cloysters of monks, or into the cells of hermits, in order to avoid the temptations of this world ; and, by a life of contemplation and self-denial, to prepare for another. It is an opposite, but not less fatal madness, that infects the world in our time. It is thoughtless dissipation and unbounded luxury in the higher ranks ; neglect and stupidity in the middling and inferior stations, and in all sensuality and selfishness. Man is placed by his Maker in a state between the angel and the brute. His superior faculties of reason and understanding, by which he is capable of so many and great improvements in the manner of his existence, and of the worship and service of his Creator, connect him with a nobler and better life, and are the links of the chain which unite him with the angelic world. But he has also a body, and must attend to its demands. His own wants, and those of persons dependant upon him, call for constant supplies ; and much of his time and thoughts

thoughts must necessarily be bestowed upon them; this then is his animal nature. The encrease of trade, and the improvements in society, have increased the number of our wants in every station of life. Luxury has banished simplicity, which exists not among us in reality, though its appearance is sometimes affected. But be that as it may, one thing is certain; that our Creator, who, by his bounty, has given us so many good things *richly to enjoy*, is not offended with our *use*, but only with our *abuse* of his benefits; and justly requires to be glorified in all. Let us examine the meaning of this, and see how all may comply with the precept.

In the first place, it is necessary to have just notions of this life, as a preparation for a better, and not to suppose that those things, which are given us here only for our comfort and refreshment, were designed as the chief object and end of our existence. Can any, except a fool, say to his soul, *let us eat*

eat and drink, for to-morrow we die? Labour and rest, food and raiment, are all necessary while we inhabit this body; and the goodness of God has so formed us, that we can take pleasure in what is needful for our preservation, and that an attention to these things may become not only innocent, but even praise-worthy, by observing the dictates of reason and religion.

When we have thus obtained just notions concerning our present state, we shall be led to enquire with eagerness, *what we are to do to inherit eternal life, seeing this life is as a shadow which passeth away? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God*; are the terms of acceptance, through Jesus Christ. Would you glorify the great Creator, whom you love and worship, it must be by performing the duties of your station; by industriously and honestly labouring with your hands, to provide things necessary for your support, according to your situation in the world; and by endeavouring

ing to have something, wherewith to assist those whom age, sickness, or poverty, have reduced to a condition of want. This is glorifying God with your substance, be it little or much. The widow's mite was noticed and commended by the charitable Saviour of the world, who approved the heart whence it proceeded, when larger gifts were overlooked. We farther glorify God, when we make a reasonable and temperate use of the good things of this world: excess in any of them is criminal; I will not say brutish, because animals are rarely guilty of it; but I will say, that it sinks man below the creatures he despises. How must it then unfit him for rising to the nature of angels when he leaves this world! How must every sort of intemperance put a stop to the improvement of his mind, and render him incapable, even of the desire of loving and serving his great Creator! Excess is also marked with the disapprobation of the Almighty, by the various evils which follow it even in this world. It occasions

sions disorder in a man's affairs, and wastes his substance in a very few years: it brings not only poverty, but disease in its train; for if health is the child of temperance, pain and wretchedness are the offspring of excess. Would you, therefore, possess the greatest of earthly blessings, a sound mind in a sound body, let me entreat you to glorify God by a sober use of his gifts; this will, by a natural consequence, preserve your body in health, and your mind in such a state of vigour, as shall fit it for the exertions of your callings, and enable you to conduct your affairs with wisdom, and probably with success.

If I have convinced you that what I recommend is your interest, even were it not your duty, it will follow that all may, as well as ought, to comply with the precept in my text. And will you be insensible to the goodness of your Heavenly Father, who leads you to seek your advantage here, and your reward hereafter in the same road, a
road

road which lies open to all his creatures? Let us then abstain from every thing he disapproves; not because we have no inclination to transgress, or because it would insure our temporal interest, for this would be to lose the reward of our obedience, but because it is displeasing to our Creator. This fear, arising from love, converts every, even the most common action, into religion. It is what the Psalmist calls, *setting the Lord always before us*; and will naturally be attended and nourished by acts of devotion, which will tend to render it a fixed principle, governing all our actions; *for he that offereth praise, glorifieth God, and to him, who ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew my salvation, saith the Lord.*

S E R M O N X.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF A RELIGIOUS
CONDUCT.

I TIM. IV. 8.

*Godliness is profitable for all things, having
the promise of the life that now is, and of
that which is to come.*

WHO that reflects upon this declaration, in a moment when the passions are calm, but will see that a religious and virtuous conduct naturally leads to our greatest happiness here and hereafter. Perhaps some of the persons, to whom I address these discourses, may never have attended to this truth, nor considered it otherwise than in a general manner. I shall, therefore, endeavour to make them thoroughly sensible, that *to fear God and keep*

his commandments, is the whole of man, with respect to his interest as well as his duty, and will produce, even in this world, greater comfort and happiness than a contrary conduct.

I shall begin by examining the character of such as do not *set the Lord before them*, and of whom it may be said, *that he is not in all their thoughts.*

It is needless to insist on what every one will see at the first glance, namely, that drunkenness, even though it should not lead to quarrels, blood-shed, and murder, which too often await it, will be followed by sickness and poverty; that the sin of debauchery is punished in this life with like dreadful consequences; and that every degree of theft and dishonesty tends to shame, and not seldom to public punishment. He that has ears to hear, and eyes to see, let him observe whether these things be not so. But though such as suffer from their being wholly abandoned to these crimes, may be, and are intended to serve as warnings to others, as

the wreck of a ship will deter the sailor from venturing his vessel near the same fatal rock; yet there is little reason to hope, that such sinners will seek reflection or instruction from religious books. *Reflection* seems their enemy, because it is agony to those who have only a black list of crimes to contemplate in past life, and whose prospect in futurity, both here and hereafter, offers nothing desirable. Should these exhortations, however, fall into the hands of any of this wretched character, I would not shut the door of mercy upon them, but persuade them to repentance and amendment, for *there is mercy with God in Christ Jesus, that he may be feared.* It is difficult to correct bad habits, but it is not impossible; it is difficult to recover the good opinion of mankind, when, by a constant course of vice, we have forfeited our claim to it; God alone can assist our endeavours in the former, and perseverance, by proving the sincerity of our amendment, can only entitle us to the latter. But as vice,

as well as virtue, grows by degrees, it is more particularly my aim to secure the youthful heart, before it is corrupted; and to stop those who have not ventured such lengths in wickedness as to have confounded every sense of right and wrong, lost every desire of pleasing their Maker, and of obtaining the favour, protection, and countenance of good men. Happy are those who are early taught to consider themselves, every moment of their lives, as in the sight of the Being who made them. If we considered that from his eyes no darkness can hide, no secrecy can veil our thoughts any more than our actions, we should not surely dare to insult his purity, by indulging such thoughts as we should be ashamed to discover to our fellow-mortals; or to be guilty of actions, which by seeking to conceal, we acknowledge to be bad. And yet, unreasonable and senseless as such a conduct appears, it is nevertheless practised every hour.

Men begin their career of vice, by neglecting their duty to God; they omit from disinclination and laziness, more than from want of time, which they make as an excuse, their daily prayers, that are commanded, not because they are profitable to God, but because they are proper to remind us of our dependence on him, and of our being accountable creatures. To this is added the neglect of public worship, or if, perhaps, from motives of vanity, it is not wholly laid aside, how is it attended? Many, I fear, neither recollect to whom they are praying, nor even wish for the blessings they join in asking. They seek no instruction from the sermons they hear, however greatly they need it; but during that quiet interval, either remain in a senseless stupidity, approaching to sleep; or, if they think at all, I may say, *that their thoughts are altogether vanity*. Thus, while days and years pass away, are they unmindful of their duty to God, forgetful of the design of their being, and inattentive to its consequences.

Should

Should sickness or death force themselves upon their thoughts, as they justly fear to account for an ill-spent life, they flatter themselves that their end is yet very remote.

I have here been describing the negligent unthinking creature, of whom I fear there are too many amongst us, and who may for a while maintain a certain reputation. Such a one may be honest, if he be surrounded with good examples; he may be temperate, if his passions be not violent; he may be diligent, if of a constitution naturally active; and he may thus escape the inconvenient and shameful consequences of open crimes. But how will such a one resist the violence of temptation, from the persuasions and examples of wicked men; or from the strength of passions, which he has suffered to grow ungovernable, by never having curbed and restrained them? How will those maintain their integrity, into whose heart it never enters to say with Jo-

E 4 seph,

seph, *how shall I do this great evil, and sin against God?* Can we expect, that those who violate their duty to their Maker, should not, when occasion offers, break through that which they owe to their neighbour and themselves? Surely the one must follow the other; for the love of God is the only security for that of his creatures. He who is without this foundation, may be compared to *a house built on the sand.*

We are placed here, my brethren, on a stage of action; each has his part allotted him, and it matters very little whether it be that of a king or a cottager, provided it be well performed. Providence has appointed different ranks among his creatures, that the happiness of all might be secured. He that has few talents may be as virtuous here, and as happy hereafter, as he who has many. He may endeavour to do his duty; he may be honest in the strictest sense, and in the highest degree, by never wasting the substance of others, or that *time* which he
has

has sold to them for the consideration of food or wages. And let me ask, whether a diligent, honest, peaceable character, has not a greater chance of happiness here, and of reward hereafter, than the negligent thoughtless creature I have been describing? for I will not affront your judgment, by comparing a virtuous man, with one openly vicious and profane, who, like a wild beast, does mischief in society, and must therefore be confined or cut off. Yes, my brethren, godliness is profitable for both worlds. Who, that possesseth a valuable servant, but would respect and esteem his character; lighten, by condescension and kindness, his state of servitude, and shew him, in a master, a protector and a friend? Would he forsake him in sickness or age? no; he would succour him in distress, either by his own means, or if they failed, by his interest with others. But were it even possible, that from incapacity, or the selfish insensibility of men, such a one should be neglected for a while, yet the testimony of

a good conscience will comfort and support him; and *he is faithful who has promised*: the sovereign of the universe is never at a loss for means to vindicate and reward his servants; and when father and mother forsake them, he will take them up. At most, the season of affliction is short, and will soon give place to a state of perfect joy, contentment and ease, to those who have fitted themselves for it. But it is as impossible for an artful, selfish, wicked mind, to be happy even in heaven, could he gain admittance there, as for an honest, virtuous, humble Christian, to be utterly miserable in any state, or in any world; for it is the inward frame, more than the outward circumstances, which make men happy or miserable.

Let us therefore think seriously on these things, and we shall feel the power of this truth, *that godliness is great gain*. Let us guard our hearts against the indulgence of evil thoughts, as the best means of preventing

ing bad actions. Let us seek the approbation of the great searcher of hearts, and whenever we have offended, speedily return to him with repentance and amendment: thus shall we experience the truth of my text, that *Godliness is profitable for all things, and has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

S E R M O N XI.

WISDOM PREFERABLE TO RICHES.

PROV. XVI. 16.

*How much better is it to get wisdom than gold;
and to get understanding, rather to be chosen
than silver?*

WHERE a man is called upon to make choice between two objects, it is necessary, in order to his determining with advantage, that he should be well acquainted with the value of each. In cases where his own wisdom is defective, it will be both prudent and natural in him to apply for advice to such as by a better understanding, or the experience of a longer life, are able to direct him.

As

As soon as we begin to think and act for ourselves, two very different objects present themselves to our view, and solicit our pursuit; *Wealth*, with the many advantages it bestows, importunes us to tread in the paths that lead to it; and *Wisdom*, with real, but modest merit, offers to be our guide, engaging to conduct us through life with safety, though perhaps with less ease and grandeur than riches may promise. The former allures by flattery, and often disappoints its followers of what it had given them reason to expect; whereas *Wisdom* very frequently bestows unpromised benefits: for worldly prosperity is not seldom the attendant on virtue. Let us then examine whether the decision made by Solomon in favor of Wisdom be just, and if it be found such, let us determine our choice by his advice.

Wisdom, throughout the whole of the book of Proverbs, signifies virtue or religion, as *folly* stands for vice. When, therefore, wisdom is set in opposition to riches, it

it is not because they are natural enemies to each other: on the contrary, Wisdom is represented as declaring, that *length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour.* Virtue permits her sons to obtain as much of this world as is consistent with moderation, justice, and honor; and to enjoy its advantages and pleasures within the bounds of temperance. The man who, on entering into life, has determined to be virtuous, has not therefore resolved to be poor; he has only engaged himself not to be dishonest in order to be rich. Industry and ingenuity are, under the divine blessing, his dependence, and these will often obtain what avarice and injustice fail in acquiring; for *Wisdom is said to dwell with Prudence, and to find out knowledge of witty inventions.* Prudence is the result of reflection, it is wisdom in action. A prudent man will avoid such risks as always endanger, and very frequently totally overthrow, the fortunes of those, who tempted by avarice, stake their whole property in order to encrease

crease it too speedily. Wisdom also teaches contentment, and says, *better is a little with righteousness, than great riches without right*; for as, in the latter, there is no security, there can be no enjoyment; but contentment and moderation are a continual feast, and will secure their possessor from innumerable difficulties and distresses.

In our text, and elsewhere, we are exhorted to *get wisdom*, and this plainly shews that something must be done, some effort made on our part, in order to possess it. Indeed, my brethren, there is nothing valuable to be acquired without pains. St. Paul, in describing the progress of Christian perfection, directs his brethren *to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge*; thereby signifying, that as faith is little to be esteemed without holiness of life, so religion must be attended with knowledge, and have a sound judgment for its foundation. This is not certainly the language of many in our day, who, perhaps, from a sense of their own
igno-

ignorance, are become the patrons and protectors of it in others. Such take it into their heads to assert, that reason has nothing to do with religion; that it is prejudicial to piety, and a dangerous counsellor in what relates to our everlasting concerns. A language like this, opens the door of entrance for the greatest contradictions, and the wildest absurdities. The Roman Catholics, and different sects of protestants, have, at various times made use of this miserable argument, according as it answered their purpose. But it is as foolish to exclude reason from religion, as it would be to pretend, that the light of the sun was not given us to distinguish objects, but that they were much better perceived in the dark. It is reason which makes man superior to the brute; it is this faculty alone, which makes him at all capable of religious sentiments; and it is *the candle of the Lord*, to enlighten and direct him in his search after truth. Let us therefore, my brethren, improve this most valuable talent, by endeavouring to form

form just and honorable notions of the nature and perfections of God, and of his dealings with man; that our love for him, and fear of offending him, may be fixed on a firm foundation; that our worship may be rational and sincere, and our obedience willing and universal. The more knowledge we have of the works of our Creator, the more clearly shall we see the greatness of his wisdom, and the extent of his goodness. It was by such contemplation, that the Psalmist exclaimed in a devout rapture: *O Lord! how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.* And if this is true in the works of nature, can it be otherwise in the kingdom of grace, whose very name of *Gospel*, signifies *glad tidings*? The nearer we examine the doctrines of Christ, the plainer shall we perceive the reasonableness and excellence of his demands, and their fitness to make us happy, both here and hereafter. It is our reason that must contemplate the character of our divine Saviour,

viour, that must lead us to approve its excellence, must warm our hearts with gratitude for what he has done and suffered for us, and raise in us a noble resolution to follow his example, and to be *faithful unto death*. Thus, I hope, you see my brethren, the advantages of reason to religion; an attempt to separate them is to injure both: Solomon constantly unites them, and calls religion, wisdom; because it is the best direction, and the highest and most excellent use of the understanding.

If then the pleasures and advantages of religious wisdom, be such as I have described, the wise man did not over-rate its value, when he gave it the preference to gold and silver. These are, in themselves, neither good nor evil; our wisdom or our folly, determines what they shall become to ourselves and to others. In the hands of a virtuous man, they are an extensive blessing; but in the possession of a wicked and and perverse fool, they are a terrible scourge.

scourge. Let us then determine, *that as wisdom is the principal thing, to get wisdom, and with all our gettings to get understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things we can desire are not to be compared unto her.*

All that now remains on the subject, is to shew you, in a few words, that the generality of Christians have this wisdom within their reach, as its attainment neither calls for uncommon leisure, nor extraordinary abilities.

A small portion of every day may be consecrated to the purposes of devotion; and the laws of man, as well as those of God, have set apart one day in seven for religious instruction. Nor are persons generally destitute of capacities for the improvement of this leisure. Few are wanting in that kind of understanding, which
from

from its universality, is called *common sense*; which, far from being a thing to be despised, is of the highest value, both to religion and morals. This, if properly cultivated, will accustom you to form right judgments of things, to know their real value; it will teach you how to act in different, and perhaps in difficult situations; though these do not often occur to a man accustomed to walk in the straight road of virtue. It is self-interest and passion, which blind and perplex men in the discharge of their duty; a mist of their own raising, not a natural obscurity, makes them call *evil good and good evil*. Change but the case, and suppose it to be that of their neighbour, and all will perceive, what in their own they pretend not to see: do therefore to others, as you wish them to do to you. This conduct will accustom you to a fairness and honesty of mind, which will extend to every object that comes within its view. Truth, in contemplation and in action, will be the only thing sought after. You will behold and
adore

adore it in the God of truth, and as you love its celestial beauty, you will seek to promote it among men, and at all times, and on all occasions, practise it yourself. You will with sincere devotion, supplicate the Father of Light to grant you in this world the knowledge of his truth, that in the world to come, you may attain life everlasting. Then, when the riches of time *have made to themselves wings, and are flown*, he who has preferred and walked in the ways of wisdom, shall see that he *has chosen that better part, that shall never be taken from him, yea, durable riches and righteousness*.—Convince our understandings, O God! and encline our hearts to keep thy laws.

S E R M O N XII.

ON EARLY PIETY.

ECCLESIASTES XII. I.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

IT is of the highest importance to man, in his journey through the world, to be guided by the advice, and directed by the experience of those who have travelled the same road, and are acquainted with its dangers and difficulties. The person who, in our text, offers to conduct the steps of those just entering into life, was every way qualified for the office. His wisdom was greater than

than that of any other man in the age in which he lived; and his wealth and power were such as enabled him to make trial of every object which can be supposed to confer worldly happiness. Power, riches, pleasure, and knowledge, engrossed him by turns, all which he declares to be vanity and emptiness; and that the only way to obtain real happiness, is early to enter, and diligently to persevere, in the path of religion and virtue.

In treating these words, my business shall be to shew you, first, what is meant by remembering your Creator; secondly, the season, *in the days of thy youth*; and thirdly, the motives to early piety, *while the evil days, &c.*

In the first place, to remember our Creator, is to consider him as the author and giver of every good thing we possess; it is to be mindful of him in the exercise of our understanding, which is his most excellent gift;

gift ; in the direction of our affections, and in the regulation of our conduct.

To remember God in the exercise of our understanding, is to use it for the purpose of knowing his perfections, and of worshipping him, not with a blind homage, but with a free and reasonable service. It is to attend to his works, his word, and his government ; and to the benefits he is continually bestowing upon us ; since inattention to his works and dealings with us, and insensibility to his benefits, are crimes, by which we defeat the end of our being, and that happiness which it was intended to convey to us.

Nor is it sufficient to be mindful of our Creator by the right use of our understanding alone ; our hearts and affections must be interested. It seems almost impossible, that the one should not lead to the other, and that beholding the perfect pattern of excellence, and hourly experiencing the effects

fects of unmerited, boundless goodness, we should stand in need of any exhortation to *love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength*, and yet, alas ! we are too apt to be cold and indifferent to this Being, who is, more than any other, worthy of our love and gratitude. He is our first and best friend, who bestows upon us life, and all that makes it a blessing ; who is the support of our infant years, the protector of our childhood, the guardian of our youth, and the hope of our future days. Frequent meditation and prayer must keep alive these sentiments in our heart. A contemplation of God, in every relation in which he stands connected with us, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Redeemer, and Judge, will greatly contribute, through the assistance he has promised to our sincere endeavours, to keep alive the flame of devotion, and to complete the character of godliness, by remembering our Creator in the regulation of our conduct.

Faith without works, says an inspired apostle, is dead. Vain will be all our knowledge of the works and perfections of God, and presumptuous all our pretences to religious sentiments and affections, if the fruits of virtue and holiness, i. e. a well-regulated life, do not follow as the consequence of our knowledge and love.—Vain, did I say? doubly criminal is that man, who with a more enlightened understanding, and a more quick and lively sense of right and wrong, is unconcerned about the performance of his duty: our Saviour tells us, *that he shall be beaten with many stripes, who knew his master's will and did it not.*

Every station in life has its difficulties, its temptations, and its trials; the remembrance of our Creator will guide us safely through these, by directing us to keep in the path of duty, which is that of safety and honour; it will give us courage to combat dangers, for if our hearts *do not condemn us as long as we live*, we shall have little reason

for other fears. It will keep us in the hour of temptation; for what so powerful as a sense of the divine presence, of the purity of his nature, and the justice with which he will punish the disobedience of his accountable creatures: nor will this be a less powerful support under trials and afflictions. TIME will disappear when we habitually look to ETERNITY; and compared with this, its short afflictions be no more than the tears and troubles of our infancy are to the enjoyments of manhood.

After having shewn you what is meant by remembering your Creator, I shall proceed to consider the *season* properest for this purpose.

Solomon well knew the strong hold that habits take on mankind. He knew that youth was the season in which to form them, and therefore directs parents and teachers *to train up a child in the way he should go*, adding, that *when he is old, he shall not de-*

part from it. Reflection on what we see in nature, may teach us this. The young and tender branches of a tree, are easily directed which way soever we please; but not so with the old: if we attempt to bend these, they will either resist us with a force too powerful, or should our strength be the greatest, they will break. Youth is the season for instruction, it is the season for lively impressions; the mind desires knowledge, the heart is full of warm affections, and a repetition of virtuous actions, will make virtue itself easy and natural, so that it will in time become habitual, and we shall be disposed to practise it, without opposition or difficulty.

Besides, is not this *our reasonable service*? Is it not just, that we should devote the best of our days and of our faculties to him who gave, and continually preserves them to us? It is not only reasonable, with regard to our Creator, but also as it relates to ourselves. Vice, my brethren, like sickness, is not our
natural

natural state; the one arises from disorder in the mind, and the other from disorder in the body; and happiness is as much connected with virtue, as enjoyment is with health. Happy those, whose early years are spent in sowing the good seed of religion and virtue! From how many dangers will they escape, and how plentiful will be their harvest! Let parents and teachers consider the severe account they will be called to give, if they let these precious moments go unimproved by those who are entrusted to their care.

We shall now consider *the motives to early piety*, namely, the speedy approach of those evil days and years, in which we can have no pleasure. *Few and evil have the days of my life been*, said the Patriarch Jacob, after having enjoyed more wealth, and lived to a more advanced age than falls to the lot of men in general. But few are indeed the years of health, vigour, and enjoyment, even in the longest life: many are past, be-

fore man is able to taste of happiness; and no sooner is he arrived at a state of maturity, than he begins to decline; his health, his strength, his beauty, are lessening by degrees, and the noble powers of his mind become weakened and impaired. See the picture of fourscore years in Barzillai, who we are told, *was a very great man, to whom David said, come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me at Jerusalem: and Barzillai said unto the king, how long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore should then thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?* His utmost wish, therefore, was to die in his own country, and to be buried with his fathers.

We see and feel then, that those days are fast approaching to each of us, and that
nothing

nothing, except death, can prevent our arriving at them. Let us, therefore, open our eyes on the propriety, necessity, and comfort, of doing our work, *while it is day*, and not deferring it to the evening of life, *when the night of death is at hand in which no man can work*. When our grey hairs are found in the way of wisdom, they are honourable, venerable, and useful: we shall then wait in peaceful hope, *all the days of our appointed time, till our change come*; we shall enjoy what is yet left us with gratitude, and regret none of the pleasures of past life; but rejoice that our course is so near its end, and be longing after the prize that is to crown our victory. How different is the man, who after a life of folly and wickedness, finds himself deprived of the possibility of farther enjoyment? he looks back with regret—he looks forward with despair! The world has no longer any pleasures for him; yet does the fear of death work upon him so strongly, that he would consent to drag on the load of this life, in the midst of

pain and weakness, mortification and contempt, rather than venture upon another. Ah! by brethren, what an object is here! Let then every motive unite to engage us in the early pursuit of religion and virtue, and in leading others to their Creator and Saviour, and we shall receive the reward of our love and obedience in the salvation of our souls. Amen.

S E R M O N XIII.

ADDRESS TO YOUNG PERSONS BEFORE
CONFIRMATION.

GALATIANS III. 27.

*For as many of you as have been baptized into
Christ have put on Christ.*

IT is necessary for such as are resolved to confirm, in a public and solemn manner, those vows and promises which were made for them at their baptism, to consider the importance of this act, by which they take upon themselves the profession of christianity, acknowledge themselves members of God's visible church, and lay themselves under the strongest obligations to live and act, as becomes the followers and disciples

of the holy and benevolent Jesus. These obligations are not new; they are the same that were imposed upon us at our baptism, and in which those who were our sponsors undertook to instruct us. And when we consider into what a world of sin and misery infants are born, we must think it a great privilege, that parents are permitted thus to dedicate their children to God and our Saviour; to commit them to the paternal protection of a merciful God, and of a gracious Redeemer, who is able to save to the uttermost.

It is owing to divine mercy, my young friends, that you have been protected during the helpless years of infancy, guarded from the dangers of childhood, and preserved to the present moment. It is owing to divine mercy, that you have been made acquainted with the truths of religion, with your obligations to God, and your duty to man; and it is to the divine mercy, that you must look for protection in every future

ture

ture part of life, and for your happiness hereafter. But the privileges you receive make it highly reasonable that you should endeavour to perform the conditions, upon which alone you can hope for their continuance. In the ceremony of confirmation you renew the vows made for you at your baptism; and what these engagements were, the Apostle informs you in our text, where he declares, that as many of you as have been baptized, have put on Christ; or, in other words, have engaged themselves, as his disciples, to renounce every evil way, to believe in his word, and to obey his commandments. Let me therefore desire your attention, while I endeavour to explain the nature of your obligations, and exhort you to comply with them.

To *put on Christ*, you must renounce every evil way. This is what is meant by renouncing the devil and his works, the vain pomp and glory of this world, with all its covetous desires, and the carnal pro-

penalties of the flesh, so that you will not follow or be led by them. Let *every one*, says the Apostle, *that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity*; this must be done by a sincere sorrow for past sins, a fixed abhorrence of whatever is contrary to the laws of God, and a firm resolution never wilfully to become subject to the dominion of any sin: this is the duty of every Christian, and I hope it is with these dispositions, joined to humble prayer to God through Christ for pardon and mercy, that you, my young friends, will engage in the solemnity; and that, through the future years of life, you will be careful to remember the awful promise you have made.

While we are here, united to a body, and in a state of society, there are many gratifications we may enjoy with innocence, and nothing is forbidden but the immoderate indulgence of them, because this weakens the impressions of religion, and renders us
indif-

indifferent to our duty here, and to the happiness promised us hereafter.

Another particular, implied in *putting on Christ*, is a desire to believe the truths of the Gospel. These are all plain and easy, or it could not be our duty to believe them. They are no other than these:—That an infinitely wise, powerful and good God, created, constantly upholds, and governs all things: that he claims our love and gratitude, as well as our veneration and respect:—that he loves virtue and goodness, the practice of which is the only means of obtaining his favour; and that we must avoid sin, which is his aversion.—That, *in the fulness of time*, God sent his son into the world, to bring back mankind from the ways of vice, in which they had erred and strayed like lost sheep.—That our blessed Lord, in obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; that he ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, where

where he is our mediator and intercessor, and is ready to bestow the assistance of his spirit, pardon, and eternal life, on all his faithful servants.—We must believe that he will come again to judge all mankind, when the dead shall be raised, and all must appear before his tribunal, to give an account of what they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad,—that the wicked will then be dreadfully punished, and the virtuous rewarded with everlasting life and happiness. These are simple facts, upon which all Christians are agreed, and are, I apprehend, all that ought to be insisted upon.—The faith required of Christians, supposes them to be already convinced of these truths, and consists in maintaining such a constant impression of them on their hearts, as will give them the most powerful motives to resist temptation, and to practise holiness. It must be kept alive by constantly reading the scriptures, particularly the New Testament; by contemplating the love of our heavenly Father in the works of creation,

tion, in the dealings of his providence, and in the wonderful mercies of redemption; by considering our obligations to our Saviour; by studying his life and actions; by private prayer to God for the assistance of his spirit, and reliance on the merits and intercession of Christ for the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our imperfect services; by reviewing his promises, attending on public worship, and remembering his dying love in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This, and this only, is the faith which, as it leads to the practice of every moral duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; can be called a saving faith.

Another thing, included in putting on Christ is, that you obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life.—Love to God and to our neighbour are the end and design of religion; and, while we continue in them, we must be safe; but a sincere and constant obedience to all the divine
com-

commands, must prove the reality of our love. It is to put you in mind of the duties you owe to God, and of the practice of justice and mercy, truth and honesty to man, that God requires you to read his word, and attend his service; which can be of no use, unless it lead to these virtues.—The intent of the gospel, is to adorn us with every grace, and to enable us properly and usefully to perform the duties of society, without which, our profession of religion will profit us nothing; *for God hath shewed thee, O man! what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* says the prophet Micah; which shews, that the intent of the Jewish religion was not different from the Christian; for St. James asserts the same thing when he declares, *that pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.*

I have

I have thus endeavoured to explain to you the nature and extent of your obligation, that you may understand the promises you are to confirm, and consider that ceremony as a solemn vow, which as it is made in the presence of Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, must be performed with seriousness and humility. Remember that the promises you make are, if I may use the expression, registered in heaven, and will add to your happiness if faithfully performed, or cover you with shame, remorse, and guilt at the last and great day, if the whole has been only a solemn mockery, entered into with levity, and unattended to after it is over.

If, on the contrary, after being seriously considered and solemnly entered into, these engagements become, as I have just observed, the rule of our conduct; they will be our comfort and support through life and in death, and will lead to that eternal happiness beyond the grave, which is reserved

served for all *who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth*; that is, whose love leads them to keep his commandments. That this may be our happy case, may God grant of his infinite mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

S E R M O N XIV.

THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

JOB XXII. 21.

*Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at
peace.*

IN every period, and in every situation of life, mankind are constantly complaining of toils and cares, vexations and disappointments. They are soured and discontented at the events of the world, and disposed to murmur against its Governor. Thus are the sweet sources of consolation, that lie beyond this life, embittered; because, in all worlds, that Governor must
for

for ever reign, in mercy or in judgement. As this disease is found among all ranks of men, my present business shall be to shew whence it proceeds, and to point out its only remedy.

By the duty enjoined in the text, *acquaint thyself now with God*, it is evident, that from a neglect of this knowledge, arises a great degree of that unhappiness, which we suffer and lament. Careless and inattentive to the goodness and wisdom displayed by God, in the beautiful and wonderful world he has created for our habitation, and which he governs by laws, so well calculated to produce the happiness of its creatures, many, alas! *live without God in the world, and having eyes, see not*. Had we no other light than that of *nature*, this stupid insensibility would be a crime; but, when we consider ourselves as the subjects of a kingdom of *grace*, as creatures on whom the light of the gospel shines, and to whom it discovers just views of the nature, perfections, and government

vernment of God, of the ends and purposes of this life, and of that immortality which awaits us in a life to come, I know not how to account for such astonishing and brutish folly; at the same time that nothing is so clear, as the misery and perplexity of a mind, overshadowed with a voluntary darkness in the midst of light. To a man unacquainted with his God, the world, richly peopled as it is with different orders of beings, all capable of a certain portion of happiness, and formed for wise purposes, is a desert; the beauties of nature a blank; and that part of the vast universe which shines with splendour over his head, an empty space, in which he neither discovers grandeur, use, or harmony. The man who has no just notions of the nature of God, can have none of his moral government, but is alike ignorant of the state in which divine wisdom has placed him, and of that for which he is designed; hence numberless errors in conduct, and a train of calamities which are their inseparable attendants,

dants, and which he has neither strength to bear, nor wisdom to improve. Instead of considering himself as placed in the world for the purposes of acquiring the habits of virtue, and a taste for true wisdom, he forgets that it is a state of trial and discipline, where he has enemies to fight against, and difficulties to overcome, from his own passions and from those of others, and supposes himself in a scene of enjoyment only. All his love is confined to himself, and all his wishes to this life; thus his peace is laid open to every enemy, and liable to be wounded by every accident. Disappointment, to such a man, occasions fretfulness, affliction, impatience; thus does every passion become a tyrant to enslave him; this world a state of war, in which *his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against his*; and, instead of beholding the grave as a refuge, *where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest*, he sees nothing but doubt and darkness, and *a fearful looking for of judgment*, hanging over that place appointed

appointed for all the living. And can you, my brethren, look upon this faithful picture of a man unacquainted with his God, and not wish to avoid every resemblance of it? Listen then to the words of sacred wisdom, *acquaint yourselves with God, and be at peace.*

If ignorance be the disease of the soul, knowledge must be its health and vigour; but where can that be found, except in the great fountain of light, of truth, and of happiness? *Look unto him, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved.* Come unto him, trust in him, love, obey, and serve him; and, if your love and obedience be sincere, it will be accepted, though mixed with much imperfection: for *he considereth our frame, and knoweth that we are but dust*; he has, therefore, provided for our infirmities, by his declarations of mercy and acceptance, of assistance and reward. These are confirmed by the sufferings of a once crucified, but now exalted Saviour, who thereby acquired a right of bestowing happiness on all his faithful

faithful followers. He will *teach them in the way that they should go*; will discover to them the true end and design of the present life, and how to partake with innocence of its many blessings given them *richly to enjoy*: he will instruct them, like St. Paul, *both how to be full, and how to be empty; both how to abound, and how to suffer need*. His heavenly precepts and divine example, will teach them to seek their happiness in their duty; to *be kindly affectioned one toward another, each preferring another*; to live like brethren of one great family, under the government of their common parent. He will shew them how to overcome temptation, to improve prosperity, to support adversity, to rise above pain and affliction, and to triumph over death, the last enemy. He will assist them to gain the victory, and to *him that overcometh*, will he distribute the crown of honor and reward.

Well might Job declare, *behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil*

evil is understanding. For, as Solomon observes of religious wisdom, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* This wisdom, expressed by the passion of *fear*, is not, my brethren, a servile terror, but the fear of a child, founded in love for the greatest and best of parents; and we may say of it, as the apostle does of faith, *that it worketh by love.* It becomes, therefore, of the highest importance to our advances in piety, and in that peace, which is its happy fruit, that we cultivate just and honourable notions of the Supreme Governor of men and angels. For if we attribute to him our weakness and our passions, we do worse than the heathens, because we sin against greater knowledge. This is a fault, into which too many Christians run, without attending to the consequences. His universal, adorable goodness, they transform into a principle of blind partiality; his justice, his power, and his majesty, into vengeance, oppression, and tyranny; and thus

G cannot

cannot honor him with that *perfect love which casteth out fear*.

Nor can we, on the other hand, expect to enjoy the peace described in our text, as the consequence of an acquaintance with God, unless we are led by it to a sincere repentance, and universal obedience. *For there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God:* their hope is presumption, and an insult to the sanctity of that Being, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and in whose presence the wicked shall not abide.* How vain then is that deceit, by which we impose upon ourselves; or that hypocrisy, by which we endeavour to mislead others; since we assuredly live, and act under the inspection of an eye, from which no darkness can hide, and are approaching to the moment when all secrets shall be revealed! Let us then learn to live for eternity; to govern our thoughts, as well as our actions, by the sacred rules of the Gospel. Let us be contented in our station; and let our
only

only concern be, how best to perform its duties, most to contribute to the glory of our master, and to the good of our brethren. Then may *we cast all our care upon God*, with the assurance, that *he careth for us, and will make all things to work together for our good*; and that after this short and transitory life, which *fleeth as a shadow and abideth not*, we shall be admitted into the everlasting abodes of true felicity, where that which was begun here, in peaceful hope, shall be perfected in the fulness of joy, for ever and ever.

S E R M O N XV.

ON THE RESPECT DUE FROM SERVANTS TO
THEIR MASTERS.

I TIM. VI. I.

*Let as many servants as are under the yoke,
count their own masters worthy of honour;
that the name of God, and his doctrine, be
not blasphemed.*

THE epistle from whence these words
are taken, abounds with much ex-
cellent advice for the regulation of our
moral conduct in the different stations of
life. Masters and servants, husbands and
wives, parents and children, may in this,
and other of St. Paul's writings, learn the
duties that God, in his gospel, requires of
them.

them. In our text, the apostle exhorts servants under the yoke, to honour their masters, and gives them a very strong motive for their obedience, *that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed*, among such as were enemies to Christianity.

At the time St. Paul wrote, and in much later periods of the church, servants were slaves; they were bought and sold like other possessions, or born the property of their masters. This made that condition of life much more mortifying and laborious, than it can be at present; for were their service never so painful, they had no prospect of any thing better, not being able to improve their condition, or to exchange their master. Some indeed obtained, after a long and faithful servitude, a grant of liberty; but the number of these was inconsiderable, when compared to the many who ended their life in bonds. Justly might domestics, in such circumstances, be said to be *under a yoke*, for where their masters were

unkind, their burthen must have been heavy indeed. Christianity is, my brethren, *the perfect law of liberty*, both to the body and the mind; nevertheless, St. Paul respected the order then established in society, though contrary to the free spirit of the Gospel. He knew the time would come, when the face of things would be changed; and instead of going about to promote it by violence and sedition, he lays in the hearts and consciences of men in all ranks, the only solid foundation for private and public happiness, in the performance of their duty, *not as unto man alone, but as unto God*. It frequently happened, that the slaves of heathen masters were converted to Christianity; but this advantage, great as it was, instead of freeing them from their former obligations, gave them only additional motives for submitting to them with patience and humility. Compare your situation, my brethren, with theirs, see how it is improved; reflect how grateful you ought to be for the change in your favor, particularly

larly in this land of liberty, *for God has not dealt thus, even yet, with every nation*; and let all such as honour not their masters, reflect, with shame and contrition of heart, on their misconduct, and resolve to amend it for the time to come.

To *count your masters worthy of honour*, is, in other words, to respect them as your superiors; never to behave to them with impertinence; to obey them in all things lawful; to make their interest your own, by diligently studying whatever may advance it, and scrupulously avoiding whatever might injure them in their persons or property. All this you bind yourself to perform, when you engage in their service; and all this will be required at your hands, when you come to account with that *great master*, whom you have in heaven, *who seeth not as man seeth*, and who is not only acquainted with all your most secret actions, but also knows the motives from

whence they arise, and will either reward or punish them openly.

I have so often represented your duty to you as your interest, that I shall not now insist on that as a reason for your right conduct; St. Paul gives you another, in the obligations you are under to glorify God, and to advance the Christian religion.

Nothing can be more pure and excellent than all the precepts of our Divine Master; they lead to the order and happiness of this world, and to the rewards of another: these are things which God hath inseparably connected, and which we cannot put asunder.—But whenever we attempt to introduce disorder into society, by a conduct unbecoming the laws of the gospel, whenever Christian servants are wanting in respect to their masters and superiors; whenever they are disobedient, dishonest, slothful, and negligent in their service, they give occasion *for the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed,*

phemed, that is, ill spoken of by such as, leading a life condemned by it, wish that it may not be spread in the world. It is a melancholy truth, my brethren, that even among a nation professing the gospel, there are many who, because their hearts are too corrupt to submit to its laws, wish to persuade themselves and others that it is all a fiction, or an invention of men. When therefore such as own themselves Christians, allow themselves to lead a life of disobedience to the command of their Lord and Master, and directly contrary to his holy example, they *cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, and to say, *what do these Christians more than others?* Thus will they insolently triumph over the cause of God and virtue: but this is not all; weak and ignorant minds, especially among the young, will be led to conclude, that there is nothing in religion but a name, and that if they assume and keep up this by attendance on divine worship every Sunday, they are at liberty to live as they please the rest of

the week. If therefore by a sinful life, we bring a reproach upon our holy profession, and by a bad example, lead others into vice, great and terrible will be our condemnation from him who has declared, that he will exclude from his presence and from future happiness, such as have only said *Lord, Lord!* that is, acknowledged him for their master, *but have not done the things that he said*: this, my brethren, is the true fruit by which the tree must be known; *shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*, says St. James; and adds, that *faith without works is dead*. You see, my brethren, that in his time there were a set of men who pretended to separate faith and works, and to teach that Christianity did not require a holy life; because good works of themselves could not merit salvation. That they cannot merit eternal life we acknowledge; this is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ; but while they are made one great condition of our acceptance, we can never be saved

saved without them. When therefore St. Paul says, *that by grace we are saved; not of works, lest any man should glory*; he was speaking of the ceremonial law of Moses, which the Jews wanted to add to the gospel, and to oblige those to follow, who were converted from heathenism or idolatry, to Christianity. This was unreasonable in them, because useless to the heathen converts; the ceremonial law of the Jews being intended for them alone, to keep up their hopes of the more perfect religion of Christ. But when ignorant teachers pervert these words of St. Paul, by explaining them into a disregard to the sacred duties and obligations of the moral law, of justice and benevolence to our neighbour, of temperance with respect to ourselves, and of love and obedience to God, they undermine the foundation, not only of Christianity, but of all religion, and lead themselves and others into a most fatal error. Suspect therefore, my brethren, all such doctrine to be false, as does not lead you to be

better. And remember that, as your condition as servants is become so much more easy and happy than it was to those to whom St. Paul wrote, you will be more inexcusable if you neglect your duty. Be grateful to God who has improved your condition; be willing cheerfully to perform your duty, and thus, *glorifying God on earth, and performing the work he has given you to do*, he will bless you here, and receive you into his rest hereafter, *where he that hath been faithful in few things, shall be made ruler over many.*

S E R M O N XVI.

FIDELITY AND OBEDIENCE TO MASTERS
THE DUTY OF SERVANTS.

EPHESIANS VI. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

IT was an excellent piece of advice, given by an ancient Greek philosopher to his disciples, that, in order always to act a worthy and becoming part, they should consider

der themselves constantly as in the presence of some great and illustrious person; for, as men in such a situation are upon their guard, and would wish to appear to advantage, he concluded that such an impression, by becoming habitual, might secure them from ever allowing themselves in what was wrong, though never so secretly performed.

—The apostle makes use of the same argument to incline us to the practice of our duty, with this advantage on his side, that the presence of Christ, and his knowledge of our actions, are real, whereas the other was only supposed. And it is certain, my brethren, that did we consider the importance of this truth to accountable beings, and keep it always in mind, we could not fall into repeated acts of disobedience; and we should be as far from committing a secret act of injustice, as from the practice of open violence.

All, but the openly vicious and abandoned, are sensible to the honor and advantage arising

arising from a good character and reputation in the world. The wicked who seek to hide their crimes, confess, by so doing, the advantages to be expected from virtue; and, by assuming the *appearance*, pay an involuntary homage to the *reality*.

You are here exhorted, my Christian friends, to be *obedient to your masters*, to fear giving them any just offence, *to serve them with singleness of heart*, that is to say, with simplicity and honesty; for *singleness*, though a word now out of use, is opposed to craft, or double dealing: this is plain from what follows, where the apostle declares, that it is not sufficient to appear to do our duty, unless we perform it in reality; *doing the will of God from the heart, with good-will doing service*, practising our duty with cheerfulness and sincerity, *as unto the Lord, not with eye-service as men-pleasers*.

The best motives, the strongest obligations are here offered to engage us to perform

form our duty; and the most glorious rewards held up for our encouragement. Will the man, who believes that he has a master in heaven, attentive to the manner in which he performs his duty to his master on earth, venture to neglect it? Will he wickedly waste and throw away the wholesome food given him for his nourishment? Will he squander the substance of others, or make use of that time for himself which belongs to his master? No, my brethren, he knows *that for all these things, God will bring him into judgment.* He will therefore pay attention to his duty, and will employ all his powers for the advantage of his master; he may be depended upon and trusted with any concerns; for he dares not be unfaithful in the smallest article, any more than in the greatest; because the same God has forbidden both. The eye of an ever-present and all-powerful, of a perfectly just and holy being, inspecting the secret thoughts of his heart, and the most hidden actions of his life, will be the most powerful preservative

vative against sin, and the strongest inducement to virtue. Let it then be ever present to your minds, and nourish this sacred awe and fear of offending God by the daily exercise of prayer. Go, not forth into a world of temptation, without having first offered up to your maker and constant preserver, the tribute of your thanks for past mercies, and implored his protection and assistance for the time to come. This, more than any other, will be a mean of preserving your obedience, by keeping alive a sense of the divine presence, and procure you the most solid and lasting peace.

How painful is the state of the eye-servant, who, with an outward shew of honesty and attachment to his master, knows himself to be no more than a vile hypocrite, and is in constant dread of a discovery, which, by proving him such to the world, will blast his reputation, ruin his credit, prevent his future success, and bring upon him shame and poverty! But, on the contrary,

trary, my friends, how happy is that servant, who, far from having any thing to hide, is conscious that all his actions will bear the eye of his master; and that the better they are known, the more will his credit be established with men, while he looks to another world for his recompence of reward, *knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free!*

Eternal happiness, my brethren, as the reward of your fidelity here, is surely sufficient to awaken all your zeal in the performance of your duty. You see, that the slave as well as the free-man, the servant as well as the master, will be brought into judgment, and be treated according to his actions. Virtue and vice are the only distinctions which will then divide mankind, though others are at present necessary for the order and happiness of the world. Let us then rejoice in the hope set before us, and labour to be found faithful, at that great day,

day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and punishment or reward be received from the Lord. In every nation, and in every situation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of him, because of a truth God is no respecter of persons. He is attentive to the conduct of the poor, and as willing to reward their virtue, as that of the richest or most powerful, for all are equally mean when compared to him. In that awful hour, those who have had an abundant portion of good things in this world, and have neglected the proper improvement of them, shall receive their evil things; whereas those, to whom a less share of worldly goods has been given, and who, in their humbler station, have, *by a patient continuance in well-doing*, diligently improved the little they had, shall be publicly praised by their heavenly master, and invited to enter into the joy of their Lord, in those happy mansions, which he is gone to prepare for them, where there are pleasures for evermore.

S E R-

S E R M O N XVII.

THE BAD CONSEQUENCES OF EXTRA-
GANCE, AND THE EXCELLENCE OF SIM-
PLICITY IN DRESS AND BEHAVIOUR.

PROV. XXXI. 30.

*Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a
woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be
praised.*

A DESIRE to please, and to obtain
the good opinion and approbation of
others, is both commendable and natural,
provided it be not the first motive to ac-
tion, and that it be directed to such objects
as are in themselves estimable. St. Paul,
whose education was as polite as it was learn-
ed,

ed, and who, to these accomplishments, had added the virtues and graces of a christian hero, after exhorting his brethren to the practice of the pure morality of his divine Master, in every branch, sums up the whole by saying, *if there be any virtue, if there be any praise*, that is, any thing praiseworthy, though it may not rank among the higher virtues, *think on these things*, count them worthy of attention and imitation; for though you should practise *all the weightier matters of the law*, such as *justice, mercy, and faith, or fidelily*, you are not complete, says our Lord and Saviour; these ought you to do, and not to leave the others undone.

The consistency, the beauty, and dignity, arising from the conduct of one *who fears the Lord*, must attract the admiration, and receive the heart-felt applause of all who behold it. Let me therefore draw some arguments from the words of the text to persuade you, my Christian friends, to the
right

right direction of a natural and useful sentiment, which, if perverted, is ridiculous, useless, and too frequently criminal. /

I have often observed, that every rank and station have their several temptations to particular vices; but *vanity* seems to belong to all. It is such a miserable weakness of the mind, that those, who are the most under its dominion, seek carefully to conceal it; and would rather be suspected of greater vices than detected in this, of which they think so meanly. Is it then not strangely inconsistent to bestow extraordinary, and often very inconvenient expence, to exhibit, on the one hand, what we so much wish on the other to hide?

The vanity of dress and show, among the middling and lower ranks in this country, is so universal and so remarkable, and leads to so much vice and disorder, that it becomes a crying evil, which, though the laws of freedom do not permit the magistrate

trate to restrain, every wise and virtuous person ought to discourage. What a violation of order and decency is it to see servants, mechanics, and the lower orders of tradesmen, with their wives and children, dressed in every respect like their masters and superiors in rank and fortune! How absurd to mistake the maid-servant for her mistress, the man-servant for his master; and yet this is frequently unavoidable. Or should we endeavour to distinguish them, we must generally determine those the superiors, in whose appearance we observe the greatest simplicity. But the folly of thus assuming a station and character which does not belong to us, and going about in masquerade, is not all; if it were, to laugh at and despise it would be the treatment it deserved. But this is far from being the case; innumerable mischiefs to individuals and to the public result from this vanity. How many poor destitute miserable wretches of both sexes, owe their vices and their ruin to this cause! A passion for admiration,
show

show and expence, among female servants, makes them wasteful of their time. They allot those hours which are not their own, to the preparing ornaments to adorn their persons; they spend their money extravagantly and foolishly, instead of employing it usefully, or making any provision for sickness or age, in themselves or their parents, and thus are they preparing future distress for both. Or should any man be so blind to his own interest, as to venture on such a wife, her extravagance, and neglect of his affairs, must bring on his ruin. But it is not as wives that they generally end their days; for their equals know they cannot maintain them, and their superiors will not think of an honorable connection; all therefore that remains for them is seduction; to which they are the most easy prey imaginable. A little finery will outweigh, with such, the considerations of honor, virtue, and happiness, and make them willing to receive in exchange, infamy, contempt, and remorse, which frequently leads them

to the most mortifying and degrading of all situations, to famine, disease, and despair. Were it not for this fatal passion of vanity in dress, our streets would not be crowded as they are with miserable females, who have cast off even the outward appearance of modesty, and are shocking and disgusting to our eyes and ears, filling us with a melancholy and fruitless compassion; for while we pity, we cannot help them. Ye, who are yet virtuous and innocent, beware, I entreat you, of a passion so dangerous to your sex and station; a rock, on which so many have split and lost all their reputation and all their happiness. Like you, they once never intended to go such lengths; personal beauty might make the vanity of setting it off to advantage in some more excusable, and, by degrees, lead them farther and farther, till they had departed from the right way. Had they been favoured, as you are, with good advice, instead of being surrounded either with persons inattentive to their welfare and their morals, or with

H

such

such as make it their business to destroy their happiness, by weakening and overthrowing their moral and religious principles, they had not sunk into such depths of misery and despair. Improve therefore the advantage you this day enjoy; learn to see things as they are; if you possess the privilege of beauty, know that cleanliness and simplicity are its greatest outward ornaments, and that meekness and modesty will give it an irresistible charm. *Let women adorn themselves with shame-facedness*, says the apostle to his female converts; and Solomon in our text shews, that all the favor, which depends on personal attractions, is deceitful, since beauty itself is vain, incapable of making either its possessors or others happy; and at most, of very short duration: but *a woman that feareth the Lord* is alone truly valuable and commendable; *she shall be praised*. How often do we meet with faces regularly beautiful, which nevertheless have something unpleasing in them? and, on the contrary, do we
not

not see others who, without one regular feature, have in their countenance such an expression of goodness as we cannot withstand? These appearances proceed from the vices or virtues of the heart, which being often repeated in the passions, leave on the features the traces of what passes within. If this wants farther explanation, observe a person addicted to anger or to envy; in the moment when they are agitated by either of these passions, you will see their features greatly and disadvantageously changed, and will not need to be told the reason. Where these, or other vices, often disturb the soul, and distort the countenance, they will leave such marks and traces, even in the finest face, as are not to be mistaken. The same is true of mild, benevolent, and virtuous sentiments.

Let us now see, whether male vanity is not as destructive as that of females. And here let our crowded prisons, the numerous exportations of our unhappy countrymen,

who propagate their vices in distant climes, and the shameful multiplication of public executions, come forth and testify how greatly they are indebted to this passion! The elegant appearance of so many idle, useless, and profligate domestics, of so many worthless and conceited apprentices, who wish to be taken for gentlemen, proceeds from vanity, and is the foundation of the mischiefs that follow. They must enter into all the gaieties and pleasures, into all the expences and vices of their masters; and must be mixed and confounded with their superiors in every place of public amusement. And how is all this to be supported, where the gains are small, and the expences large? Pilfering such inconsiderable sums as they think will not be missed, is perhaps the first, as in appearance it is the safest, method of supply to which they can have recourse. But it is soon found insufficient for their demands; they endeavour to encrease it by gaming; trifling successes encourage them to go on,

with the hopes of acquiring considerable sums. But soon this flattering prospect disappears, and, instead of having gained any thing, they find themselves involved, in what are called debts of honor, to an amount they are not likely ever to be able to discharge. Must I go on, my brethren, and follow them through the remainder of their short, but dangerous and shameful course! They have now only two resources left, creditors are pressing, a jail stares them in the face, to avoid which, for the present, they must, either by forgery or theft, rob their masters, or betake themselves to the highway, and it matters very little of which they make choice, as they both lead to the same shameful and untimely end.

Thus have I, my friends, traced the progress of vanity, step by step, in both sexes, that you may observe its dangerous tendency, and suppress its early beginnings. Seek to be commended and applauded if you will, but let it be for such qualities and

things as are estimable and praise-worthy. Secure first the approbation of God, and of your own conscience, and that of virtuous and sensible men will follow of itself: they will commend where they esteem, and you may take delight in the assurance you have of possessing their good opinion; for *a good name is better than riches*. Let parents beware of exciting in their children an early attention to, and love of dress. It may be said indeed, that it is a bauble only fit to amuse our infancy, and unworthy of our riper years: this is true, if you will; but it is too dangerous an experiment to make, because, when all the other amusements of childhood are thrown aside, we continually observe this retained, by such as are children all their days, if not in innocence and simplicity, at least in taste and judgment.

Let masters and mistresses discourage in their servants an appearance unsuitable to their station, by making decency in dress
one

one of the conditions of their service. Let the public in general unite their efforts in discountenancing the vanity and shew of the lower orders of tradesmen. They are useful and respectable members of society, while they know their place; but they are both ridiculous in themselves, and hurtful to the public, when they go out of it. The number of bankruptcies would be greatly diminished, if less time and money were spent on dress and amusements. It is a public cause, my brethren, in which all are concerned, and to which all must contribute. We should then see less poverty and vice, and prosperity would run down our streets, as a mighty torrent: pray then for your native land, *that peace may be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces.* Amen.

S E R M O N XVIII.

ON DILIGENCE.

 PROV. XXXI. 27, 28.

*She looketh well to the ways of her household,
and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her
children arise up and call her blessed; her
husband also, and he praiseth her.*

SUCH is the character of *the virtuous woman*, whose price is declared to be *far above rubies*. And in effect, my brethren, what can be more honourable, or what more useful to society, than such a female, whose whole study is to do her duty, and thereby advance the comfort and well-being of all with whom providence has connected

nected her? As much of the life of Solomon had been spent among women, he may be considered as a good judge of what was most meritorious and valuable in them; wherever they are mentioned, we find him liberal in his commendations of sobriety, gentleness, and diligence, and severe in his reproofs of the opposite vices. He speaks the same language with the mother of king Lemuel, when he says, *that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband*, or in other words, a source of domestic happiness, of prosperity and wealth, and of public honour.

Much of the happiness of the world depends on the conduct of women; nor will any, who understand the interest of society, treat that part of it as objects of indifference, whose education may be neglected, whose principles may be perverted, and whose pursuits are too trifling to merit attention. This, my brethren, must be the language either of seduction, which seeks more easily

to corrupt female morals, by representing them as of little or no consequence; or of folly and stupidity, which cannot discern the influence of women as wives and mothers, or see how much of the present, and of the future happiness of families and of communities, is lodged in their hands.

The first principles of the virtues, even of men, are derived from good impressions made on them in their infant years, by their mothers; can, then, the example and instructions of these be considered as of no importance? It is true, that after the first season of childhood is past, boys are separated from their mothers, and thrown into the world; but how soon do they again feel the want of female society, and of that comfort and assistance which each sex is made to afford to the other? The first step to a man's comfortable establishment in life, is his marriage; and the good or bad choice he makes in a wife, determines the sum of
com-

comfort and prosperity, or the portion of disgrace and misery, that is to attend his future days.

It has been said of women, that they are more inclined to vanity than men, because it is the defect of weak minds. They soon discover their influence, and suppose it to be the result of youth, of beauty, of gaiety, and dress, to which they consequently turn all their attention, neither thinking sufficiently well of themselves, nor of the judgment of those whom they wish to please. Shall I add, what is also true, that they are led into this error, by the commendations often bestowed, and the preference frequently given by men, to these pleasing, but not essential advantages. This cannot fail to happen, because there are many sons, as well as daughters of folly. Nevertheless, I would wish to inspire my female readers, with a just sense of their worth and importance, by shewing them their dignity and influence,

ence, and engaging them to maintain the one and exert the other aright.

If the mother of king Lemuel thought it necessary, for the happiness of her son, to make choice of such a wife as we find her describing in this chapter, of how much greater moment must it be, to one who must live by his industry, to have a diligent and careful partner? It is more particularly the business of a man to provide the means of subsistence for his family, but it is that of his wife, by a careful oeconomy, to make the most of what he has committed to her management. It is she, that must enter into the small concerns of domestic expence; it is her business to keep a constant watch over the ways of her servants, if she have any; and, if she have none, over her own management, and the wants and conduct of her children. She must not, therefore, waste her time in sloth, or in going about from house to house, discouraging

courting about the affairs of others, and leaving her own at random : for ruin, in every shape, will follow on such conduct. Laziness, in the lower ranks, is *the root of every evil* ; it brings poverty on a family, *like an armed man*. Cleanliness may be accounted a virtue ; but filthiness, if not a sin in itself, is in the lower ranks almost always the immediate consequence of sinful dispositions, and particularly of sloth. In its train comes dishonesty ; for those who will not work, must either beg or steal, and the last is often considered as the easiest and shortest way of supplying their wants.

Such, my brethren, is the result of inattention to domestic duties and employments, in a wife or a mother : nor is this all ; the minds of her children are as much neglected as their bodies, and vice is fast taking root, where religion and good morals are not early implanted. Order and comfort are no longer to be found under such a roof ; the husband avoids his home, and
spends

spends his time and his money in an ale-house; drunkenness is the consequence; a jail is open to receive him, and his wife and family must take refuge in some parish work-house; this is the shameful and miserable end of such as *look not to the affairs of their household, but expect to eat the bread of idleness*. Let me now, by way of inducement to a contrary conduct, set before you its advantages.

The character of a virtuous woman is fully described in this chapter, from the tenth verse to the end; and it is there, I beg my female readers to behold a pattern of conduct held up to them for their imitation. For though a station of high rank is here referred to, yet, as I hinted before, if such attention and diligence are necessary there, how can the lower orders prosper without them? All must pursue a right line of conduct, though all do not arrive at an equal degree of wealth; this is neither necessary, nor would it be proper. In a well conducted
2 house,

house, order, cleanliness, ease, and even abundance will be found, and are the result of female industry. A man will taste the sweets of his labour, and be induced to greater diligence, when he sees his children and himself both clothed and fed, and every want supplied by the care and good management of his wife; his home will become his delight; he will have the means of bringing up his children honestly and usefully, whether as servants or tradesmen; and both parents will enjoy the prospect of receiving assistance from them in their turn, if sickness or unmerited misfortunes should come upon them; for we are told, that the children of such *shall arise up and call them blessed.*

The degree of respect and love, which parents are to expect from their children, greatly and justly depend upon their own conduct. If they are not kind and helpful to their offspring, what right have they to expect any love; or whence can it possibly

sibly arise? If the conduct of parents is bad, and their character despicable, have they any claim to respect? If, in spite of neglect and bad example, the children of such parents have any virtue and religion, their generous concern will be roused, and they will be led to return them good for evil. But how different is the state, and how much more desirable the condition of her, whose children, from a sense of benefits received as far back as they can remember, *arise up and call her blessed*? If anything in this world can repay the pains and toils, the anxieties and cares of a mother, it is surely the respect, the attachment, the improvement, and prosperity of her children; and this delightful reward awaits the virtuous woman. Her husband also, who receives so much happiness and credit from the conduct of his wife, will feel a respect and attachment for her, which nothing can shake. Well may he consider her as his best and truest earthly friend, who has made his happiness her business, and his interest her
most

most assiduous care; and as, *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, so will his esteem and gratitude overflow, in just and liberal praises of her worth; and while *the fruits of her hands, and her own works praise her in the gate*, her husband also shall rise up, in token of respect, and he shall praise her. And when the benefits and advantages, that are in this life connected with a virtuous conduct, shall be at an end; when nothing shall remain, but to look back on the past, in order to judge with what ground of hope we can look forward, then comes the balm of comfort, in the contemplation of a well-spent life, and in the peaceful and humble assurance of acceptance and reward; when *this corruptible body shall have put on incorruption and this mortal, have put on immortality*, then can the virtuous wife and mother, appear before her merciful Saviour and judge, with a trust founded on his own gracious promises, and say, *Behold, here am I, and those*

those whom thou hast given me! That this may be the happy condition of all among my readers who are placed in such circumstances, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SER.

S E R M O N XIX.

THE ADVANTAGES OF AN HUMBLE STATION
POINTED OUT.

PROV. XXVIII. 6.

Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

THE advantages of riches are certainly many, both as they procure enjoyment to ourselves and to others. To such as take pleasure in acts of kindness and works of charity, nothing can afford more delight, than the satisfaction arising from the power which their wealth gives them of relieving the indigent, and encouraging the virtuous. With these views, my brethren,

thren, we are allowed to desire riches, in a moderate degree; and to endeavour to obtain them by an honest and industrious application to our several callings. But as we too often see them become a snare to their possessors, my design is to warn you against too great a desire after them; to shew you that there are many temptations attending them; and, that in order to make them really a blessing, more wisdom, and greater integrity of heart are required, than we are apt to suspect.

Man walketh in a vain shew, says the Psalmist; a gaudy appearance of luxury dazzles the eyes of the multitude, and leads them to take that for happiness, which, without virtue, is only splendid misery. We are taught in the Parable of the Talents, that where *much is given, much improvement will be required*; this is just and reasonable. But how many, who have set out in life with promising appearances of religion and virtue, have been seen to forsake them, and to become

become selfish and vicious on the acquisition of riches ! The ease with which every want was supplied the moment it arose, served only to encrease their number ; and the distance at which poverty and misery seemed to be removed from them, hardened their hearts against the afflictions and necessities of the poor ; they *thought that the mountain of their prosperity stood strong, and would never be moved* ; and, while clothed themselves in purple and fine linnen, and faring sumptuously every day, they stretched not out their hand to the relief of the sick, the hungry, and the naked, who lay at their door. Degrees of this inattention are daily seen, wherein men shew themselves *lovers of themselves*. Let us not, therefore, wish for a situation in the world, which so abounds with temptations, and lays so many snares for our virtue, that it is represented as hard (that is difficult) for those who have riches, to enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but considering ourselves as stewards of the bounties of Providence, and accountable

countable to our master for their improvement, let us rest contented with the portion with which he has entrusted us, and endeavour to make it honourable to God, and useful to the world; for *better*, in his sight, *is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.*

The words of the text are so plain, my brethren, that they need little explanation; I shall, therefore, only just observe, that the term *perverse* is generally used in Scripture, and constantly in the book from whence these words are taken, to signify wickedness, which is also called *folly* in opposition to *wisdom*, or as it is named in our text, *uprightness*; I shall therefore proceed to shew, that the poor, who walketh in his uprightness, is far happier in himself, more useful to society, and more acceptable to God, than the wicked or perverse man, though placed in a state of worldly prosperity and grandeur.

Few,

Few, my brethren, are the wants of nature, and their supply is within the reach of the bulk of mankind: these industry can obtain, and temperance alone enjoy. Hunger gives relish to food, and labour sweetens rest, while moderation in both, and bodily activity, preserve to us these advantages, by contributing to the blessing of health, which is more frequently found to attend on the frugal meals of the poor, than on the pampered tables of the wealthy. But there are yet other advantages belonging to the upright poor, for as much of their time must be devoted to labour, they are less exposed to the seductions of idleness, and not likely to be tormented with a restless ambition. Poverty is not, however, without its temptations; envy and dishonesty are among their number; but, as these spring from a lazy and vicious disposition, I need not dwell upon them, when I am describing the *poor who walketh in his uprightness*, for to such a character belongs sweet peace and contentment. He is sensible that he enjoys more blessings

blessings from the hand of Providence, than he has deserved, and only wishes to become more worthy in the sight of God. He knows that *the lot is cast into the lap, and that the disposal thereof is from the Lord*; he will not therefore repine at the prosperity of his neighbour, but *will rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep*; and as the different ranks in society conduce to the good of the whole, he will, by industriously and honestly performing the duties of his station, be not only happier in himself than his perverse rich neighbour, but also more useful to the world; which was the second thing I meant to shew.

If wealth does not encrease the happiness of its possessor, and the good of society, it will assuredly add to the misery of both, because the best things, when perverted, become the worst. For whether the covetous, by hoarding up riches, withhold from others and from themselves the blessings they might bestow; or whether a profuse luxury turn
them

them into objects of vice and misery to their owner and to the world, they are equally pernicious to mankind, by being thrown into a wrong channel; and the man who is guilty of this abuse is answerable to his maker, both for the good which he neglects, and for the evil which he does. His station in life makes his example of more weight and of greater extent; when, therefore, this is bad, more will be led astray by it; whereas poverty, when accompanied with piety, may be highly useful to the world: the poor naturally serve for examples to the poor, but by a religious and virtuous conduct, they may become very edifying patterns even to the rich. Thus I hope you are convinced, my brethren, *that the righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour*; and that the riches of the wicked become a curse to themselves and to society. It now only remains to shew, that the *poor who walketh in his uprightness*, is more acceptable in the sight of God.

The Lord is in his holy temple, says David, his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men: the Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance does behold the upright. Such is the declaration of one, who from a shepherd, was become a great king, and could form a judgment of the opposite stations of prosperity and adversity; for of the latter he had a considerable share, particularly during the life of Saul. It is virtue, he tells us, and goodness alone, that can make men acceptable to Him, who is not deceived by outward appearances; before whom all other grandeur disappears; *who laughs at the prosperity of the wicked*, be their station never so exalted, *and will mock when their fear cometh*; for come it will, my brethren, when year after year, the mercies of a long-suffering God have been ungratefully

fully abused. We are told that he will at length come, to take vengeance on his enemies ; or I might more properly say, on such as are enemies to themselves ; for as by *our righteousness, we cannot be profitable to God, as a man is profitable to his neighbour*, neither can we by our wickedness in the least affect or diminish his happiness. It is only to ourselves, and to creatures like ourselves, that the one and the other can relate. When we are, therefore, said in Scripture *to be at enmity with God through wicked works, to be fighting against God, or to be his friends working together with Him*, it is only a language suited to our infirmity, taken from what passes in the world. But nothing can be plainer, than that *God regardeth not the person of a man* ; all ranks are equally dependent upon him. The Saviour of the World, the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace, was not a conqueror ; he was poor, despised and rejected. Does not this shew you, my brethren, that virtue and holiness are the only true riches ? and these are as much

within the reach of the poor as of the wealthy. Let me then engage you, from these considerations, not to seek with too much anxiety, *the bread that perisheth*; but rather *that which endureth to everlasting life*—not to *lay up your treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal*, but to place it in heaven where it is liable to none of these accidents. This may be done in the manner I have been pointing out; it may also be done by the rich, who, by a right use and improvement of their substance, *make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*, by the good works they perform with it. Consider these things, my brethren, and may the Lord *give you a good understanding in the things that belong to your peace, before they are hid from your eyes.* Amen.

S E R M O N XX.

HAPPINESS INDEPENDENT ON WEALTH.

 PROVERBS XV. 17.

*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than
a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.*

THE real blessings of life, my brethren, lie in a small compass; health, peace and competence may be said to comprehend them all. A magnificent dwelling, a number of domestics, a great variety of rich dresses, the stalled ox, or the fatted calf, are only a false show, an appearance of happiness, hung out by pride and luxury to deceive the unwary; *calling, like the foolish woman, to passengers who go right on their*

way; whoſo is ſimple let him turn in hither.
 Be not therefore ſeduced by theſe allurements, which may, or may not, be attended with happineſs, according to the good or bad diſpoſition of their poſſeſſor, but are not in themſelves the thing we ſo much deſire and ſeek after; this dwells within us, a kind, benevolent, and peaceable diſpoſition, a mind in which dwells the love of God, and the love of mankind, is the true ſeat of happineſs, and may be found in the meaneſt ſtations, even in ſuch a ſtate of poverty, as does not admit of any of the indulgences of the body, and can but juſt furniſh its neceſſaries. Would to God that theſe virtues were more generally met with among all ranks, and that you eſpecially, my brethren, who poſſeſs not the artificial pomp and glare of happineſs, were careful to ſecure that true and ſolid enjoyment, which lies within your reach. Favour me then with your ſerious attention, while I am endeavouring to aſſiſt you in acquiring this valuable prize.

I know

I know, and pity the many disadvantages of poverty, though a merciful Providence has never yet called upon me to experience them in my own person. I know that the demands of nature are pressing, that hunger is keen, that cold is pinching, that labour is frequently painful, and that, where a family is dependent on labour alone for its support, little leisure remains for the improvement of the mind. If the rich, in the midst of a needless abundance, are tempted, like Asaph, to be *envious at the prosperity of the wicked*, how much more naturally may that passion arise in the mind of him who can but just procure a daily subsistence! Different virtues are required of us in different stations, and contentment is one of the brightest that can adorn an humble condition. How greatly superior, in the sight of God, and in the judgment of all good men, is the destitute and suffering Lazarus, whose days were embittered, and probably shortened, by sickness and want, to the selfish though splendid,

Dives, who after death received his portion *of evil things*, not because he had in this life enjoyed prosperity, for this would be unjust, but because he had abused it by neglecting the improvement of his *good things*. Patience, contentment, humility, a firm trust in the providence of God, that he will bless your honest endeavours to provide for yourselves and your families; thankfulness to your superiors for the assistance they bestow upon you, in providing work for you while you are able to do it, and in giving you help in sickness and age; these, my brethren, are the dispositions which make *a dinner of herbs, better than a stalled ox* without them.

The wisdom and goodness of God has formed us so, that happiness of every kind must be the result of our own endeavours. The object is set before us all, and the desire of obtaining it implanted in every breast. We seek it in different ways, according to the true or false opinions we form of things;
and,

and, upon this estimate, depends our success. Religion, my brethren, is the best guide we can possibly take with us. This will at once direct our choice to whatever is virtuous, amiable, and excellent; will point out our duty in every station, and bring with it *the fruit of righteousness*, and of happiness also, *sown in peace, of them that make peace*. It is the character, given by St. James, of *the wisdom that is from above*, that it is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits*. But, if in the midst of *bitter envyings and strife in their hearts*, any should glory, that is, pretend to be happy; the same Apostle declares, that they *lie against the truth*; for it is impossible that, *where there is envying and strife*, there should not be *confusion, every evil work*, and misery. We must therefore, in order to avoid these, cultivate a disposition to love and to do good to all around us. Nothing is so easy as to place ourselves in imagination in the situation of another; we do this without knowing, or at

least, attending to what passes within us. What else will lead a man often to endanger his own life to preserve that of a fellow-creature, who is perhaps to him a perfect stranger? We may accustom ourselves to this on the smallest occasions, by constantly making the well-being of others a part of our own. This will incline us willingly to give up our own interest to theirs. It is generally trifling things that create strife and animosities in families, where it is so beautiful and pleasant a thing *to dwell together in love*. Let parents, by mutual kindness, assistance and forbearance, set an example of these virtues to their children, and accustom them in early years to the practice of them among each other. A house, where order and harmony, decency and love prevail, is tasting the advantages of present enjoyment, and preparing for posterity useful members of society. The pomp of pride, and the riotings of luxury, present a very different appearance both with respect to the present and the future. Hatred,
brings

brings with it a train of evils. The soul, in which it dwells, must be miserable. The experience of all who have felt it, though even in a small degree, can inform them, how restless, turbulent, and uneasy that mind must be, which is often a prey to it. No worldly riches or grandeur, no advantages of birth or of understanding, can make an ill-natured, envious, malignant man happy. The best enjoyments are lost to him: he cannot *rejoice with those that rejoice, or weep with those that weep*: he knows not the delightful sensation of alleviating the afflictions, and encreasing the satisfactions of his neighbour. I go farther, my brethren; *for if any man saith, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him: for whosoever doth not righteousness, saith St. John, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother; for this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. But he that hateth his brother, i. e. his fellow creature, is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he*

goeth, because that darkness has blinded his eyes. Such a one is in the same state with regard to his happiness and the safety of his immortal soul, as a man travelling in the dark is, with respect to his enjoyment and security.

The same apostle tells us, that *God is love*. If this be his nature, he must take pleasure in beholding it in his reasonable creatures. The greater their advances in a spirit of benevolence and charity, the fitter will they be for heaven; *for he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God*, even while in this world, *and God in him*. Could we even separate things that, in their natures, are so closely connected together as misery is with hatred; could we promise temporal happiness, where the benevolent affections do not exist, we should still endeavour to persuade you, my brethren, to consider eternity as more important than time, and the joys of heaven better worth seeking, than the greatest earthly pleasures; but this is far from
being

being the case. *Better for both worlds, is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.* Make it therefore your choice; and though you cannot constantly lead all, with whom you may happen to be connected, to the same conduct, yet your meek and peaceful temper will greatly contribute towards it; besides that you are answerable only for your own conduct, and if that be good, you will be rewarded here with the testimony of a good conscience; *for if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:* and, in the hour of death, and day of judgment, we shall have every thing to hope from *the love of God, in Christ Jesus, which passeth knowledge.*—Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XXI.

AGAINST CRUELTY.

PROVERBS XII. 10.

*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast:
but the tender mercies of the wicked are
cruel.*

RELIGION, my brethren, where it is sincere, makes a character consistent; it extends to the smallest actions, even to the treatment of animals, as Solomon informs us in the words just read.

Kindness and compassion are so beautiful in themselves, so grateful and pleasing in their exercise, and so advantageous to society, that wherever their effects are seen,

6 they

they are admired and loved. Would to God, they were as universally imitated ! The humane and benevolent man is stamped with the image of his Maker. He walks forth upon the earth like his representative, doing good to all whom he approaches, whether fellow creatures or animals. He is the faithful steward of the bounties of heaven ; he tastes them with gratitude himself, and distributes them with generosity to others. He knows, that in greater or lesser degrees, a sense of pain and of pleasure are inseparable from existence. He knows that *the Lord is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.* Life and happiness residing originally in God, and proceeding from Him to all his creatures, convinces the religious man that it is his delight, that they should dwell together in all his works. The introduction of sin into the world, has disturbed this delightful union. The diseases and death which disobedience has entailed on all who inhabit this earth, have made it a state of warfare,
from

from the spider who preys upon the fly, to man who devours the innocent unsuspecting lamb, or the meek majestic ox. But though the lion no longer lies down with the lamb, and that Providence, for wise reasons, has appointed that the various creatures with which this earth is filled, should by death make way for new generations, and that even their loss of life should become useful to the support of that principle in others, yet we can have no right to exercise our authority, by inflicting, or causing, unnecessary sufferings; and he must be inhuman indeed, who can attentively behold the pangs of misery even in the meanest animal, without wishing to alleviate them.

The refinements proceeding from luxury, are too often hurtful to the cause of humanity. All seek their own ease and enjoyment, and are little attentive to the pains and groans which their pleasures cost others. My present endeavours shall be employed

to

to enquire into the common sources of cruelty, and to point out its criminal nature.

Inattention may be considered as one cause of such actions as are hurtful to others. I mean not to confound it with the diabolical spirit of cool intended cruelty; but as the pain it occasions to the object on whom it is exercised may be equally grievous, and as it may in time so harden the heart, as to make it insensible to the feelings of compassion for the sufferings it inflicts, I cannot avoid the mention of what very often lays the foundation of more deliberate cruelty. Children are particularly in this danger. Suffered to play with insects or animals, they see their struggles without perceiving that it is by their awkwardness that their delicate bodies are hurt. This then is the season to be improved by parents; it is the moment most proper to inform youth, that an animal, or the smallest insect, feels as much pain from the loss of a leg or a wing, as
the

the tearing off of any member would give themselves.

Selfishness is a second source of cruelty; and one less easily corrected than inattention, because rooted in the character. A selfish man may indeed plead, that he means no harm to others, and is only pursuing what, in some way or other, he thinks will contribute to his enjoyment. This end obtained he cares not what sufferings it has cost. Animals may linger and die in torture; tenants may be oppressed, servants harrassed and worn out, without one reflection on the injustice of the proceeding. Nay, more: a selfish man is not contented with being the torment of animals, or of his inferiors in rank or fortune; he is often led to become the scourge of his family and friends. This ought to convince you, how dangerous it is to give way to this disposition, and incline you to check it in its first beginnings.

I come

I come now, reluctantly, to consider a crime of the deepest dye, of which I would hope few, comparatively speaking, are guilty. This is *deliberate cruelty*.

Would to God that no examples had ever existed of monsters, disgraceful to the human form, the plagues of mankind! Such have began their shameful and bloody course, by causing, with malignant pleasure, the sufferings of insects; and have afterwards become ingenious in devising new torments for their fellow-creatures.

Vice in the heart of man, may be compared to the entrance of an enemy into your country. If those who are appointed to keep guard, neglect their duty, and permit the foe once to enter in, much more strength must be exerted, and much greater wisdom employed to prevent his gaining ground, than were necessary to prevent his first approach. Thus it fares in the case of evil inclinations: repel them at first and they will

will be conquered, but be negligent and they will obtain a complete victory. You will then be the unhappy slave of sin in this life, and the miserable sufferer for it in the next.

Having considered the sources, or springs, of Cruelty, I shall proceed to point out its extreme wickedness.

The cruel man sins against his own nature. Our quick sense of pain, and our natural aversion to it, was not given us merely to guard ourselves, but to teach us a fellow feeling for the happiness of all God's creatures here, from the highest to the lowest, and to prevent us from ever wilfully or needlessly hurting them in their bodies or their minds.

We allow that God was led by his wisdom and goodness to employ his power in creating the vast variety of beings that inhabit and adorn this world. All are his work-

workmanship. Nor in this respect has the man any thing to claim above the reptile; for God is their common parent. He governs and provides for all. It is his indulgent bounty that gives him the superiority he enjoys, and that dignifies him with power over other animals. The moderate and humane exercise of his authority is permitted him; he may eat their flesh for food, and make use of their strength for labour; but in the one case, he must seek the most easy way of putting them to death, and, in the other, not require more from their strength than they are able to afford him without pain.

In this land of knowledge and of freedom, shall I add in a Christian land, one very crying abuse prevails. It is the wanton barbarity exercised on horses. Those noble, inoffensive, and useful creatures, are universally abused throughout the kingdom. Their lives are made miserable, as well as shortened by the inhuman calculation

tion which is made of their services. It appears perhaps more advantageous to their masters, that the labour of two or three days should be crowded into one; and that a creature made and intended by Providence to be happy and useful for twenty years, should finish his painful existence in half that time. The selfish avarice of the man must be indulged at the expence of the generous animal, who is for the present under his hard-hearted dominion.

But farther; cruelty, in every degree, is an ungrateful abuse of power, and open rebellion against God. If man was made the governor and head of this world, it was that he might do good, and learn by the right exercise and improvement of a *few talents*, to employ more noble and extensive powers aright hereafter. There is, be assured, my brethren, a tribunal where the groans and sufferings of injured animals will be heard, their cause pleaded, and perhaps redressed. At that bar of perfect justice, the man who
has

has insulted and abused them, shall be convicted and severely punished. He will then bitterly repent of that pride and folly which led him into rebellion, and to act as far as was in his power in opposition to the benevolent design of God, to his laws, and to the example of meekness, charity, and divine goodness, which shone so bright in the life of the Son of God upon earth.

Charity brought him down from heaven on the great errand of redeeming mercy; of which he has left us a pattern that we may follow his steps. *Blessed then are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* But woe to you unmerciful and cruel man, *for with the measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Let us then be workers together with God in doing good; let us rejoice in the happiness of all that breathes. If lower orders of creatures have less enjoyment than we, it ought to encrease our gratitude, and is assuredly the most solid reason

reason for our not lessening the share allotted them. *Let us be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful,* and we shall, through the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, obtain mercy and everlasting reward. That this may be our happy case, may God of his infinite compassion grant. Amen.



THE END.